

Semi-Monthly

No.

BEADLE'S

Novels Series.

190.

DIME NOVELS



THE PHANTOM HORSEMAN.

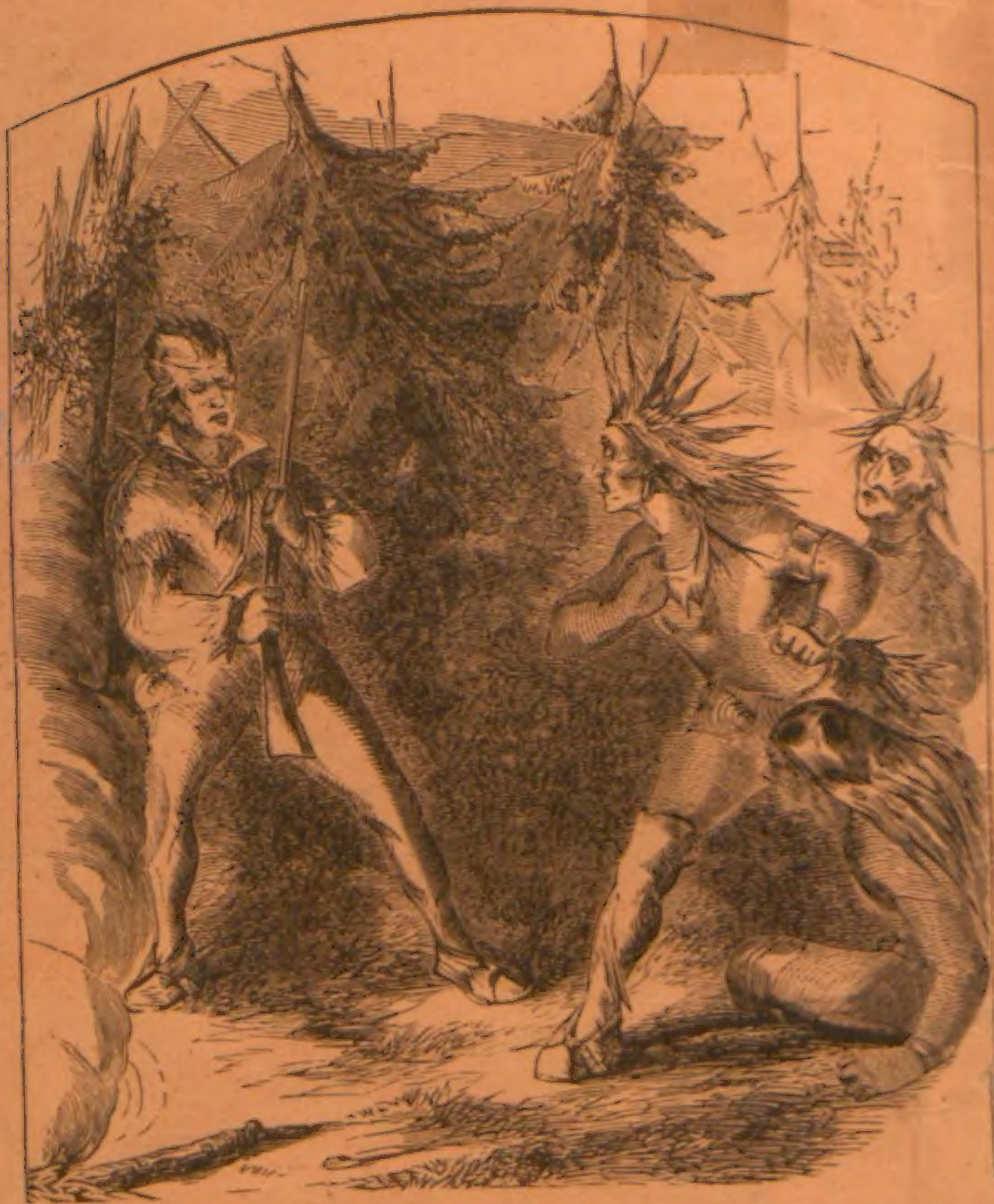
BEADLE AND COMPANY, 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

The Western News Company, Chicago, Ill.

Life-Hunter
Headle's Dime Novels, No. 191—Ready Tuesday, Nov. 23d.

RED SLAYER, THE LIFE-HUNTER.

BY W. J. HAMILTON.



"Ah, ha!" yelled Red Wing. "Do you know me? I am Red Wing, chief of the Canghnawaga Mohawks. You shall die."

"And you shall know me, murderers that you are," cried Meigs. "When I hear my name you may well tremble. I am the Red Slayer—the Life-Hunter—Mohawk! Now die! Murderers of all my kindred, die like wolves at bay!"

THE

L. L. Kernal
PHANTOM HORSEMAN;

OR,

THE MAD HUNTER OF THE MOHAWK.

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS,

Author of the following Dime Novels:

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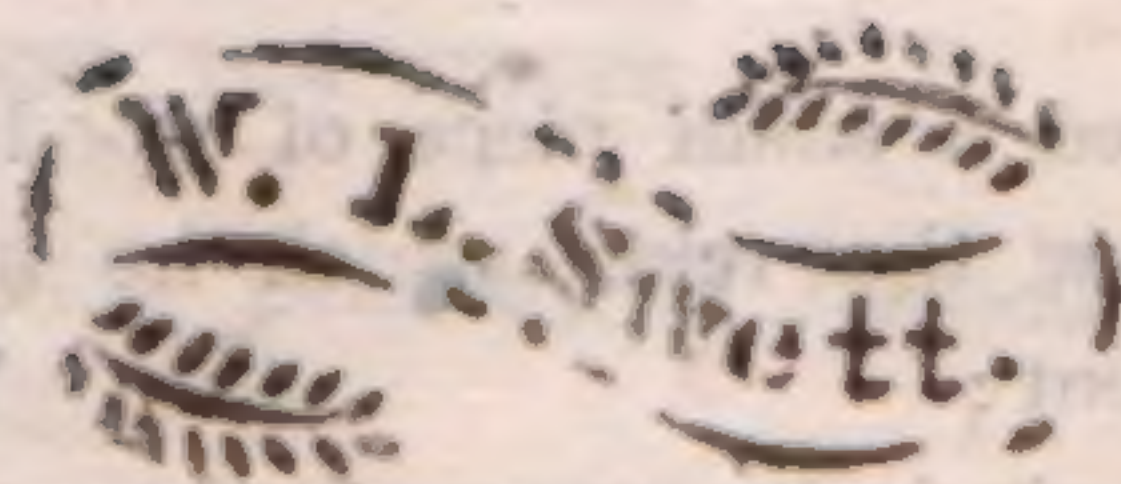
BEADLE AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS,

99 WILLIAM STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1869, by
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Southern District of New York.

(No. 190.)



THE

PHANTOM HORSEMAN.

CHAPTER I.

THERE was great commotion in the Mohawk Valley. A force of British and Tories had entered that lovely vale, and were raging like so many demons let loose. The settlers were flying, with pale lips, to the nearest refuge, some fortifying themselves, as best they could, in their houses, others fighting stubbornly in the harvest-fields, while a few fell almost unresisting victims to these barbarians.

On this same afternoon, a light wagon, with cover—a sort of “prairie schooner”—was hurrying along the road, in the lower part of the valley, at a rate which showed that it was fleeing from some appalling danger.

In it were seated Mr. Kingslake, an elderly gentleman and his corpulent partner, his son, Edward, Hans Van Waddleyauh, a stupid Dutchman, and Mr. Vreeland. They were making all haste toward the house of Mr. Vreeland, where his family, consisting of his son, Horace, wife and daughter, Edith, were anxiously awaiting him. Edward Kingslake and the fair Edith had been betrothed for a few months, and, as may well be supposed, he was almost beside himself with his great fear.

They were hurrying down the road at a rapid pace, and I

approached a small piece of woods, when Mr. Kingslake suddenly drew the reins, which he held, with the startling announcement:

"It won't do to go any further; there are Indians ahead of us!"

"Yes," replied Mr. Kingslake; "there are Indians in the piece of wood, and we shall be stopped if we try to reach the house in that direction."

"We will go across the fields, then," said Mr. Vreeland. "Hans, let this bar down."

"Yaw," responded the Dutchman, slowly rising to his feet, and looking about him, as if uncertain which were the best means of descending to the ground.

"For God's sake, be quick!" exclaimed Mr. Kingslake, growing nervous; "we may be seen any minute."

"Yaw, I ish quick!" replied Van Waddleyauh, looking around more rapidly, still undecided as before. Finally, he jumped out in so bungling a manner that he fell headlong, and rolled like a tub upon the ground.

Either Mr. Vreeland or young Kingslake would have sprung out of the wagon and performed the duty required of the Dutchman, had they not been revolving another matter in their minds.

The order was no sooner given for the bars to be removed, than they both began seriously to ask themselves whether it was a wise plan to leave the road, and shut themselves up in a field, where it was impossible to avail themselves of the use of their horses.

The great anxiety of both, it may be said, was to reach the Vreeland mansion, and afford assistance to those within.

Mr. Vreeland was swayed by all the affection of a husband and father, while young Kingslake, apart from his anxiety for the safety of his parents, was greatly distressed at the danger of his betrothed.

"Doonder and blitzen!" called out Hans, tugging away at

the last remaining bar, which persistently refused to come forth. "Somebody nail him in."

"Pull, pull, you lazy dog!" exclaimed Mr. Kingslake. "You're not half trying."

"Yes; I tries like ebery ting. O, mein head! mein head!"

The last exclamations were caused by the rail coming so suddenly out, that Hans fell over backward, holding it in his hand.

Critical as was the situation of our friends, they all smiled at his discomfiture. Mr. Kingslake, turning his horses' heads toward the field, drove into it, and then reined up impatiently for the Dutchman, who had begun to replace the rails.

"Never mind, never mind," called out Mr. Kingslake; "there is no need of putting them up again. Come into the wagon."

"Yaw; I bees there, but I stays here till I fixes de fence."

"Stay there, then!"

The horses started at a rapid trot across the field toward the house, while Hans, dropping his rail, hurried after them.

The advantage of this route, to the fugitives, was that it brought them very near their destination, without running so great a risk of discovery as if they had remained in the road. Between them and the piece of woods, in which Kingslake had detected signs of the enemy, stretched a high stone wall, which effectually shut out observation from that quarter.

The great disadvantage was that, if detected by the Indians, there was no hope of escape. The only avenue was through the opening by which they had entered, and this being closed, they were at the mercy of their foes.

Our friends had progressed well across the meadow, and, as they neared their destination, their hearts beat high with hope, when they were nearly startled out of their senses by an Indian whoop, and the next instant they saw a huge, painted Mohawk leap over the wall, tomahawk in hand, and come rapidly toward them.

"What is to be done?" asked Mr. Kingslake, half checking his horses. "Shall we turn and go into the road again?"

"No, indeed; keep straight ahead."

"Perhaps," ventured young Kingslake, "he is a friendly Indian."

"Friendly Satan!" was the impatient comment of his father. "Look at the painted imp; see his eyes shine, and he is smacking his chops at the prospect of a taste of our blood."

"As he seems to be the only one, suppose you rein in your horses."

"But, hang it, there are others close by."

In times of panic and massacre, it often happens that strong men become as powerless as terrified children. During the recent Minnesota outrages, more than once, a single Sioux warrior, leaping among a dozen fugitives, huddled together, and consisting of men, women, and children, tomahawked one after another, while the men sat, stolid and unresisting, not even attempting to ward off the uplifted weapon.

It may be that the Mohawk, striding across the field toward the whites, who were calmly awaiting his approach, had had some experience similar to this. As he held his keen-edged tomahawk in his right hand, and toyed with the haft of his hunting knife in his belt, his black eyes glittered with malignant hatred.

Hans Van Waddleyauh was one of the first to catch sight of this dangerous-looking visitor, and he concluded to give him a wide berth. He had no arms except such as nature had given him; and even had he been armed in the most approved style, he would have been as shy of an encounter as he was when the odds were so strongly against him.

Circling around, so as to let the wagon eclipse the light of the Indian's visage, he stealthily approached the fugitives, with the intention of burying himself in the center of them, and then allowing the creature to rage.

The latter did not deign to notice the cowering Dutchman. His eye was filled with nobler game, and he advanced upon it, as the lion approaches the unconscious antelope.

But the Mohawk made a slight error. The quiet waiting of

the fugitives was not caused by terror, but, by simple curiosity. As none of them had weapons in their hands, he knew no better than to think they had none at their command.

"Hang me, if he doesn't mean to attack the whole party!" said Mr. Vreeland, in an under tone. "Shall I drop him."

"Perhaps he means no harm," said the mild-tempered Mrs. Kingslake. "It would be a pity to kill him if he were a friend of ours."

By this time the Mohawk was close at hand, and he began contorting his painted visage into one of those hideous grins which are occasionally met with in this world, and which, so far as we are capable of judging, may be indicative of extreme bodily pain, or the most blissful state of happiness.

"As a friend, I advise you to keep off," said Mr. Kingslake, waving his hand toward him.

"Yes, we have got three loaded guns in the wagon," said Mrs. Kingslake, in her genuine kindness of heart; "if you try to hurt us, they will aim them at you, pull the trigger, and maybe hurt you, and perhaps even kill you. So don't come any nigher, I advise you as one who wishes you well."

The Mohawk, instead of heeding these admonitions, gave utterance to a whoop, and, raising his tomahawk aloft, made a dash toward the group.

"Confound you! I can soon settle your account," said young Kingslake, aiming full at his breast and pulling the trigger.

The Indian threw his arms aloft, uttered one wild yell, and fell dead.

"Now make all haste for the upper end of the field," said Mr. Vreeland; "that report will bring a dozen of them upon us."

"Hold on a minute!" called out Hans Von Waddeyauh, striving to clamber into the wagon; "I've got my foot fas in de wheel."

"Get it loose very speedily, or I shall start forward and twist it off."

"Yaw, I gets him loose shust so soon as I can pulls him out; dat is, I pulls him out shust so soon as he gets loose."

If tugging and groaning could do any thing, Hans should have succeeded, for he strove until his face looked like the full moon rising over the side of the wagon.

Mr. Kingslake grew more impatient each moment. Losing his temper, for doubtless it has been seen that he was somewhat irritable, he said :

"You can better afford to lose your foot than we our lives. Get up."

At the same moment he struck his animals with the whip and they sprang forward. Von Waddleyauh suffered no discomfiture thereby, but clambered into the wagon with the consoling announcement :

"Dat vos foony ! My foot wasn't fast in de wheel at all."

"How was it, then?"

"I stuck him under de edge of the wagon, and was trying to lift up de wagon. Yaw ! yaw ! dat was very foony."

"Your 'foony' tricks will be the death of us," said Kingslake.

Shortly after the wagon reached the corner of the lot, which was within a hundred yards of the house. Here there was a spring and milk-house, within which our friends took refuge, while young Kingslake proceeded to reconnoiter the premises, to see whether it was safe to attempt to enter the building.

Cautiously nearing the wall, he removed several stones and gazed through. He saw nothing of Indians, but the house itself wore a suspicious look. The doors and windows were closed, and an unwonted stillness prevailed within.

He listened, but could hear nothing. Several times he was on the point of calling to those inside, but the risk was too great, and he had already turned to rejoin his friends when an Indian bounded over the wall and dropped beside him.

Kingsland clubbed his rifle to defend himself, when the savage placed his finger to his lips and shook his head.

"Don't strike ! You know Mintu, de Seneca?"

"No ; not in that war-paint," replied the young man, lowering his gun.

CHAPTER II.

MUTT, the Seneca, was a friendly Indian, well known during the Revolution throughout the Mohawk Valley.

For a dozen years he had lived in the settlement of Millville, acquiring, as is always the case with his race, all the vices of the whites, but retaining, at the same time, many of the virtues of his own people.

He was very fond of liquor, and for days at a time rolled around the village, the most pitiable of objects. Then would follow weeks in which he never touched a drop of the mad denigrating drink, and was one of the keenest witted of men.

He would take to the woods, and come back at the end of his hunt, loaded with game, the proceeds of which gave him one of the most glorious of speecs.

It is a well-known peculiarity of this violent craving which consumes a man's system, that, like the deadly virus, the rage, it lies so latent for a time, that the victim is unconscious of its presence, or believes it has passed away, when, in the midst of his fancied safety, it seizes him with such fury that he is as helpless in its hands as is the infant in the grasp of the giant.

The Seneca, being an exceptional character, traveled as he pleased, and made himself at home in whatever house or family he pleased. Often he had remained at Mr. Kinglake's and Vreeland's, so that he was well known to both.

Young Kinglake had been on several hunting excursions with him, and there existed quite an attachment between the two.

Muttu, upon discovering the invasion of the neighborhood by his people—the Iroquois—had donned the war-dress and paint, not for the purpose of joining them, but with the object of saving as many of his friends as possible.

By appearing on the war-path in the paraphernalia of an Iroquois, he avoided suspicion from his own race, although his disguise was so complete that he ran all the danger from the whites to which their actual enemies were exposed.

After several exploits, the recital of which is not required by our story, he found himself in the vicinity of the Vreelands', and his encounter with young Kingslake has been given.

The first inquiry of the latter was a natural one :

"What are you doing in that war-paint? Have you joined them?"

"Dey tink so," was the answer, which at the same time explained the case to Kingslake. "Where oder people—in milk-house?"

"How do you know that?"

"Tink so—don't know it."

"Yes, they are there; come, go with me, and tell them all you can, for Mr. Vreeland is in great fear about his family."

The two moved toward the milk-house, the Seneca in his stealthy manner glancing around him, as though he feared danger in some shape or other.

Our friends within, who had been cautiously looking for him from the moment young Kingslake left them, had seen the interview between the two, and had guessed its meaning. The door was opened for them, and the next moment they were securely within.

"Where is my family?" was the first inquiry of Mr. Vreeland; "do you know any thing of them?"

"Dey all right," was the assuring reply.

"Have you seen them?"

"Me seen 'em. De ole squaw, de young Flower of 'de Valley, de young Warrior, and de Middle of de Night."

These appellations were understood as referring respectively to Mrs. Vreeland, Edith, Horace, and the negro, Jim.

"Where did you see them?"

"Seed 'em go in de house!"

"Thank God!" was the fervent response of the father and husband. "They are safe for the present, at least."

"Where are the Indians?" inquired Mr. Kingslake.

"All round—soon shoot at de house."

"It wont do to remain here," said Mr Vreeland; "the wall shuts out our view from the house, and when they are attacked, we can do nothing."

"No; we shall have to change our quarters."

"Dese be very goot quarters, dey bese cool," ventured Hans Von Waddleyauh, who had seated himself in the icy rivulet of water some three or four inches deep that coursed through the milk-house. He had also just disposed of a pan of milk that happened to be within reach.

"They may be made a great deal hotter before long," replied young Kingslake.

"Yaw," assented Hans, feeling on the best of terms with every one.

The next step was to apprise the inmates of the house of the proximity of their friends. How this was to be done was the great question.

The Seneca said that the building was under the eyes of the Indians at that very moment. The presence of a single face at the window would be sure to be fatal.

On the other hand, there was equal reason to believe that Horace and Jim were on the alert, and the moment a Mohawk sought to reach the house, that moment would be an equally fatal one to him.

The two parties were thus placed face to face, each waiting for some act upon the part of the other, and yet both afraid to take the initiative.

An open approach to the house upon the part of our friends, without warning those within, would have exposed them to the fire of the outlying Mohawks, and most likely to capture and death, before they could be admitted.

One thing caused a great wonder among the entire party. While the Valley was filled with burning barns and houses and

the shouts of the excited savages, all was still around them. The buildings stood as quiet as if it were the dead hour of midnight.

Why such was the case, it is hard to say. The Seneca being asked, replied that they had no flint with them with which to kindle a fire. It being summer, only a few went provided with the means of ignition.

Fortunate as it was, it could not be expected to remain thus for any length of time. If the Iroquois were held at bay much longer, some of them would seek out a comrade who had the wherewith to bring the buildings to ashes, or would bring a blazing torch from the ruins of some house.

Mintu recalled that when Horace and Kinglake had accompanied him on hunting expeditions, there was a signal that was frequently used among them. It was a whistle repeated and given in the manner of the bird now generally known as the "Virginia partridge," and whose cry among the farmers is supposed to be a good rendition of the words "*Bob-White*," and which is doubtless familiar to all.

As it is heard at all times of day, its utterance on the present occasion need not excite the suspicion of the Mohawks, although similar signals were much in vogue among them.

The Seneca, stepping forth, so as to be in full view, gave the signal in a clear, natural manner, and then looked up to the building for some recognition of it. Although he waited for several minutes, he saw nothing. Finally he gave it again, so loud and clear on the still, noontide air, that he was certain it must have caught the ear of every one within as well as without the house.

The answer to this call was a startling one. While Mintu stood looking up at the windows, the baleful visages of two Mohawks rose over the wall, and the next instant they descended, and were beside their astonished brother.

The Seneca discovered an admirable presence of mind. Saluting them in a friendly manner, he stepped forward to

meet them. Before coming forth, he had foresight enough to close the door of the milk-house behind him, so that nothing was seen of his friends, and they, upon detecting the alarming turn of affairs, kept quiet, and, great as was their curiosity, remained away from the windows.

"Our brother is calling to his brother in the house?" said the Mohawks, beginning at once to question their new-found "brother."

"The rifle of Owongah is long and sees well. When the white man appears, it will see him and seek him before he can flee."

The Seneca had adopted this name for safety; and, as has been noticed, was trying to make his attempt at friendly converse with those inside wear the look of a ruse upon his part to bring them within rifle range.

"Owongah knows the cry that will call his brother forth?" pursued the Mohawks in a taunting manner.

"Does he?" asked the Seneca, excitedly. "Then where are they? Show them to Owongah! Let my brothers speak."

This piece of acting was well done, and served Mintu well. Their suspicion of him was met so indignantly and triumphantly by him, that they could not gainsay it. And yet the ruse came very near being fatal to him; for Horace Vreeland at that moment looked out upon the parties with curious interest. He saw them point toward the building, and when they turned their faces toward him, he recognized the Seneca, and then comprehended all.

"Will Owongah go and watch with us?"

"He will fight for his people," replied the Iroquois, who was really glad to get the savages from the vicinity of the milk-house, where he feared every moment the presence of his friends would be betrayed by some act upon their part.

They were about to start away, when one of the Mohawks turned and said:

"Has Owongah brothers that he leaves behind him?" looking at the same time toward their refuge.

"Let him examine for himself."

The two Iroquois started toward the milk-house, but paused, disarmed by the apparent readiness of the Seneca. All might have been well, but at this juncture the voice of Von Wad-dleyauh was heard:

"Dar isn't any one in dis place!"

CHAPTER. III.

THE hand of the foremost Mohawk was upon the handle of the door of the milk-house, when he paused and dropped lifeless to the earth, pierced through by a bullet from the rifle of Horace Vreeland, who was intently watching their movements from his window.

Before the second Iroquois could comprehend his danger the Seneca had sprung upon him and with his keen-pointed hunting-knife he quickly placed him beyond all possibility of inflicting evil.

Then, as the door was unfastened, he whisked within the small building, which was quickly secured, and all was again still.

For fifteen minutes not a sound or movement, within or without the building, showed the presence of a human being. The other Iroquois seemed to think their brothers on the other side of the wall could manage their own affairs, and for a time at least they did not seek to find whether the shot fired from the building had been fatal or not.

At the end of fifteen minutes or so, the lynx eye of the Seneca saw a slight movement in the small wooden shutter at the upper window. He answered by placing his hand through the small window of his own fort and waving it to show that he was on the watch.

For some time nothing more was seen when the shutter

slowly opened half-way, and the face of Horace Vreeland was visible. He simply pointed to the other side of the house and then drew it to again. It was enough, the Seneca comprehended him.

The window at which young Vreeland made his appearance was at the end, while he had fired his gun from the front.

Miutu now carefully reconnoitered the house as far as possible from his situation, for he was about to go forth, and wished to do so with as little danger as possible to himself.

"What do you propose doing?" inquired Mr. Kingslake of the Seneca.

"Go round wall—he open door—den we all run in : Mohawk no see us."

"Doonder und blitzen! dey run faster nor me," said Von Waddleyauh in alarm. "You carries me in?"

"Not exactly," replied Mr. Vreeland, who had lost a great deal of interest in the welfare of the Dutchman since the blunders of which he had been guilty.

"Den I stays here."

"To which none of us will object."

By this time Miutu had assured himself that all was well, and, opening the door of the milk-house just wide enough to admit his body, he ran to the wall, along which he hurried until he reached a point opposite the window from which the signal had been given. Here, as the wall kept on in a straight line, it was of no further use.

"He now stopped, and began quietly taking down the stones of which it was made. This called for great skill and delicacy, for there was danger in displacing one that he might set a dozen rolling down.

The Seneca, with the characteristic patience of his race, went at the business as though he had twenty-four hours to complete it in. Beginning at the top, he took one down after another, first assuring himself that each stone could be loosened with safety.

At the end of a half-hour the opening reached to within a foot of the ground, and was broad enough to allow the passage of a goodly-sized man.

This done, the Seneca looked up to the window for some evidence that his action was understood. It was given. He pointed to the lower door; another signal was received, and the next moment he was within the milk-house.

"I leads de way," said Mintu, "you come next," pointing to Mrs. Kingslake, "de rest come on."

"I shtays here," said Von Waddleyauh, stoutly; "dey catch me afore I gots in dere."

No one cared to dispute his wish, and the little company emerged without further delay. The opening in the wall was reached, and almost at the same instant the lower door was quietly opened, and the face of Horace Vreeland appeared.

This was all that was wanted, and the Seneca ran lightly across the space and held the door open. The aged Mrs. Kingslake hurried in, then her husband, then Mr. Vreeland, then young Kingslake, and lastly Mintu himself. The door was closed and barred, and all was secure.

The reunited friends closed hands, with glowing faces, and the men hurried to their stations, to be ready for any movement on the part of the enemy. Young Kingslake, however, lingered behind, a few moments, with Edith Vreeland. Pressing her silently to his bosom, he kissed her pale forehead.

"I was afraid you would never reach us," she said, in a low voice.

"And I feared it would be too late if I did. How fortunate that you were warned in time!"

"Yes; Horace came running to the house an hour or two ago, and told us to fasten every door and window, for the Indians were in the Valley, and would be here in a few minutes."

"What a pleasure for me to fight beside you!" said our hero, once more pressing the lovely girl to his breast and kissing her again and again.

"And O how glad I am that you and your folks came with

father. There are enough of us now to take care of ourselves, no matter how many of them come."

"The Tories seem to be in another portion of the Valley. If the Indians do not set fire to the building, I have strong hopes of holding out. If it takes too long to bring us to terms, I think they will leave us alone, as there is too much work on their hands for them to spend a long time here."

"From our upper windows, it looks to me as though all the houses for miles are on fire. Has yours been burned?"

"It was untouched when we came away. How long it will stay so I cannot say. Very probably it is burning this moment."

"I hope not—indeed, I do."

"And so do I; for where should I find a nest for my bonnie bird, this fall, when I take her away from her own?"

Eliza blushed like a truly modest girl that she was.

"If the Indians set fire to our house," she said, "you may not have any '*bird*' to take away with you."

"True; but if they intended to fire it, would they not have done so long ago? It seems strange that they should not; but the queerest people in the world are these Indians. Just look at Mintu, that Seneca! It is a wonder that I did not shoot him for a Mohawk, when he first came upon me, painted and dressed as he is."

"It is well for us that he has come among us at this time."

"Yes, it seems to me quite providential; his presence, I think, insures our safety. It takes fire to fight fire, and so it takes Iroquois to fight Iroquois."

"How is he a Seneca and an Iroquois at the same time?"

"The Mohawks, Senecas, Oneidas, Cayugas, and Onondagas make up the Iroquois or Five Nations, as they are called. As a people, they are fighting on the side of England, but some of our best friends are found among them. Mintu is one of them."

"He has not lived with his tribe since I can remember."

"No; he hangs about the settlement, but he has done goo

service during the war. When he gets into danger, it makes a genuine redskin of him. He enjoys this work more than any of the Mohawks."

"And more than any of us inside."

"I have no doubt of that; it is something to which you are unused, and to which, I pray God, you may remain unused for the rest of your life. But, Edith, I must not remain here while the others are doing their duty."

"They are all stationed, and as there are no guns fired, they cannot need you. They will call you soon enough, if they need you."

"Very likely father would do so a little *before* they need me," laughed Edward, recalling the irritation his parent had shown during the last hour or so.

"Then remain here for a time at least. O, Edward! who can tell how long we may be spared to each other?"

"Tut, tut, my dear; you musn't talk in that style, or you will unman me. You must encourage us instead."

"You need no encouragement, I know, to do your best; but then let me pray you be careful."

"Certainly, I will. When we know that so many lives besides our own are depending upon us, do you think we are going to throw ourselves away? Not I, especially when I look ahead a few months."

The fond lover, stirred by the roseate picture his mind drew of the future, kissed the fair girl over and over again, and sought to laugh away her fears as idle and unworthy of her.

For his sake, she tried to cheer up, and turn her thoughts to other subjects; but she did so only partially.

"It is foolish, dearest, to think that any of us can foretell what is to take place. We certainly have every reason to hope; why, then, seek to dispirit us by these gloomy fancies of yours?"

"I utter them only to you, Edward, and not to make you sad and foreboding. I feel great anxiety. Let me urge you then to be careful about exposing yourself."

"I promise *you* gladly, so let us bid good-by to these distressing thoughts. Let us see; it is to be on the first of September, isn't it?"

"You know better, you rogue; it is the last of October."

"Strange how I should make that mistake," replied the lover with a serio-comic air; "but are you sure you are right? It seems to me that every time I ask you, you put it a month or two further off."

"No, indeed, I do not; that is the date we agreed on long ago."

"Let it remain so, then; the last of September you say."

A box of the ears reminded Kingslake rather forcibly of his error, and he hastened to confess it.

At this instant, the report of a gun above their heads broke the stillness, and the elder Mr. Kingslake called to his son.

"I am needed," said he, hastily pressing Edith to his bosom; "good-by for the present."

CHAPTER IV.

If our readers be any judges of Indian warfare, no doubt they have agreed that the action of the besieging Mohawks was curious; to say the least.

That they should stay on one side of a stone wall, while their prey were manipulating upon the other; that they should permit a free exchange of signals between the friends within and those without the house; that finally the latter should be allowed entrance into the building, while they lay watching: these, we say, must have struck our readers as being to the last degree improbable.

And such would have been the case, had there really been any Iroquois in waiting; but in spite of the fears of the Seneca and our friends, there had been but four Indians who attacked the Vreeland mansion.

One of these received his quietus, as he tried to stop the wagon, the other two closed their accounts in front of the milk-house. This left but one enemy remaining. He soon learned the fate of his companions; and had started off in search of reinforcements, or, failing to find them, to give up the whole business as a bad speculation.

It will thus be seen, that when Mintu and Horace passed signals so stealthily, there were no enemies to see them; and when the former took the stones in the wall with such care, it was all useless labor. For all the risk run in so doing, he and his party might have gone to the front door, given a knock with the huge brass knocker, and calmly waited the answer to the call.

Safely locked within the house, the Seneca scanned the premises without, and declared that there was not a savage within rifle-shot. This, as a matter of course, caused as much surprise as pleasure.

"The danger is, then, ended?" said Mr. Vreeland more in the form of a question than assertion. Mintu shook his head.

"Dey come back soon—bring more Mohawk, be big trouble."

This was surely a positive answer to the question and was so taken by all. As there could be no certainty from what direction their enemies would come, the men were placed at the different sides of the house, with orders to fire the very instant they gained sight of an Indian.

The shot of which we have spoken was fired by the Seneca, who had caught sight of an Iroquois creeping toward the barn, no doubt with the purpose of firing it. At the moment he was checked, he was not a dozen feet from it.

Mintu was in the act of reloading his gun, looking carefully out all the while, when an exclamation from the negro Jim arrested his attention. Giving his station to young Kingslake, who appeared at that moment, he crossed the road to where the sable patriot stood.

"What matter?" he asked.

"Who pig am dat?" he asked. "Dat aint our pig rooting round out dar; we aint got any sich looking hog as he."

"Ugh!" ejaculated the Seneca, shoving his gun through the corner of the window, and firing at it. The result satisfied all as to the identity of the pig. It rolled over on its back, displaying the face and limbs of a Mohawk in his war-paint. It was the old artifice repeated so many times before and since, succeeding often, but failing nearly as many times, when common prudence was used upon the part of those against whom it was brought into play.

These two occurrences, almost together, convinced our friends of the truth of the Seneca's warning, and every one used the utmost caution.

In the meantime, an interesting by-play was going on in the neighborhood of the milk-house. The sight of the two harnessed horses in the field, and the prostrate forms of their brother warriors, brought half a dozen of the foe in that direction.

Hans Von Waddleyauh had seen them coming, and, in great trepidation, shrunk away into one of the corners. Several minutes passing without hearing any thing of the savages, he raised his eyes to one of the barred windows and peered out.

Said to say a Mohawk was looking at that very window, at that moment, and saw his great round face, as it came to view, and then suddenly dropped out of sight. An expressive "Ugh!" announced to his companions the discovery of something, and he quickly acquainted them with what he had seen.

As there was no certainty of the number of whites in the small building, the savages were disposed to be cautious at first. Perhaps they might have left the Dutchman alone had he not precipitated matters himself.

Finding he was seen, Van Waddleyauh became very anxious to propitiate the Iroquois.

"If you means peace, I means peace!" he called out. "You lets me alones, and I lets you alones! You kills me, and, so help me Got, I kills you!"

This bringing no answer, he concluded to adopt another artifice. Several of his friends within the building were watching the parties with great interest. They saw the Iroquois skulking near, and when Hans spoke to them in his loud voice, they brought their heads near together as if in consultation.

The next thing observed was a huge pan of milk making its way through the window, from which Hans had removed the bars. This was intended as a peace-offering to the thirsty Iroquois. The latter evidently eyed it with suspicion, not knowing whether to take it as ominous of some invention that was to harm them, or whether it was really intended for their benefit.

"It ish for you," called out Hans; "I milked him dis morning, shust on purpose to have him ready when you comes along."

One of the Iroquois, who had some knowledge of the English tongue, stepped forward and accepted the lactated liquid, and, taking a good long draught from it, passed it to his companions.

"You needn't pay for it—I don't charge nothin' for it; dar's plenty more here, doo."

"Ugh! good—more!" exclaimed the Mohawk, reaching up for a second installment.

"Yaw, yaw!" replied the kind-hearted Dutchman, stooping down for another pan.

This was speedily handed out; and as one of the Indians took it, another caught the unsuspecting Von Walleyen by the arms, and he came tumbling headlong out.

"I zurrenders," he said quickly, as he arose to his feet—an announcement which we may state was entirely unnecessary under the circumstances.

Our friends within the house had observed these proceedings with no little interest, and with a variety of doubts as to what

was best for them to do. They could not but be amused at the manoeuvres of Von Waddleyauh, but mingled with this feeling was a strong fear regarding his fate.

Horace Vreckland and Edward Kingslake strongly urged firing a volley among the Iroquois, in the hope of driving and keeping them away from the milk-house; but the Seneca opposed this, vehemently. The older members, deferring to his knowledge of the "situation," would not counsel any disobedience of orders, and the impulsive young men were therefore compelled to forbear.

Afterward they had opportunity fully to acknowledge the wisdom of Mintu.

Had they fired into the Mohawks, they would have slain only a portion of them, while the others could have forced an entrance from the opposite side, where they were safe from their bullets, and terrible would have been the vengeance wreaked upon the poor Dutchman.

Moreover, all this parleying was gaining time, which was now of the last importance. This raid into the Mohawk Valley, or this portion of it, would not last a great while, and the longer the savages were kept at a distance the nearer was the time of their final withdrawal.

"I surrender," repeated Hans, to make sure that his captors should hear him. "I leave my gun in care. Shall I fetch him?"

"You get it," commanded one of them.

The Dutchman threw his ponderous body with such momentum against the door, that it immediately swung inward, allowing him to reel nearly across the room. Quickly catching up his rifle, he handed it to the Indian, and then waddled back again in search of more eatables for them.

The milk-house, as is still the custom among American farmers, was used during the hot weather as a depository for milk and butter principally, but often for other articles of food, such as puddings, pies, &c.

Finding the door open, the half-dozen Iroquois entered, and began an onslaught upon the eatables. Savage as was their

tastes, they had seen enough of civilized life to enjoy such bounties as these, and they devoured them with a gusto that proved them the possessor of any thing except dainty appetites.

The black eyes of the Seneca sparkled as he saw that every one of the Iroquois were in the house. What a chance for him to slip down, with one or two of his companions, and, drawing the door to, shoot them as they came out the windows! What a complete triumph it would afford him!

But ah! what would become of Van Waddleyauh? There were signs of other Indians in the vicinity, and where would they be during the performance? No—it would never do; he would have to give over his cherished plan.

All this time the Iroquois were feasting themselves to the utmost, totally oblivious of the game before them. The ferocity with which they ate Mrs. Vreeland's dainties was complimentary to her culinary attainments, and serious as were the time and occasion, there was no little amusement occasioned when they emerged again, their bodies covered with milk, their cheeks distended almost to bursting with pies and puddings, and their visages shining from the rich, oily cream that had been rubbed over them.

Van Waddleyauh came forth among them, holding a hemisphere of pie in his right hand, from which he took enormous mouthfuls, and manifestly enjoying it as much as did any of the lawless personages around him.

"I do believe he has eaten more than any of them," laughed Mrs. Vreeland. "Edith has missed pies and pans of milk very frequently for the last month or two. It is now easy to see what has become of them."

"And that explains why he used to go out of the field, and come back again, wiping his mouth, saying he was fond of the apples in the corner of the orchard. He thought of something else besides his personal safety when he concluded to take refuge there."

"He seems evidently on the best of terms with the Iroquois. Perhaps he may be able——"

"Ugh!" interrupted the Seneca, "Iroquois comin'—now sure."

Such was indeed the case. The critical moment was at hand!

CHAPTER V.

THE Iroquois were still pleasantly engaged in helping Van Waddleyauh demolish the delicacies of Mrs. Vreeland, when a faint halloo came borne to them across the field. Instantly they dropped every thing except their weapons; and, upon the repetition of the signal, dashed through the opening in the stone wall, dragging their prisoner with them, and leaving the bodies of their friends where they fell.

Here, to the surprise of those inside, they made a rush against the lower door, which was so strongly barred that they rebounded, as does the ball when thrown against a stationary object.

This demonstration was unexpected to all excepting the Seneca, who had been looking for something like it for the last hour. Their reply was a rattling fire, so eager and hasty that it only wounded a single enemy. The others scattered to cover, and now began a series of genuine artifices, ruses, and stratagems, intended to deceive the besieged and to afford the others a temporary advantage.

One of the Mohawks, covering his body with a board, tried an insidious approach, but he soon learned to his cost that such a shield was futile against the bullet of the white man's rifle. That project, therefore, was speedily given up as a failure.

Another Iroquois labored under the delusion that, by keeping close to the fence, and creeping very slowly on his hands and knees, he could deceive those within. This idea was exploded simultaneously with the charge of the Seneca's rifle.

Still another tried to get within the building by professions

of friendship, but was received so coldly, or rather warmly, that he skurried ignominiously out of sight.

Our friends thus far most certainly had kept the best of the fight; and they had begun to congratulate themselves upon their success, when Mr. Vreeland, with white lips, exclaimed:

"The barn! the barn!"

A faint blue smoke was rising from one of the corners. This was quickly followed by an arrowy point of flame, and almost at the same second a dozen spears of fire burst through in as many different places. The barn, filled to bursting with grain, hay, and the most combustible of material, was on fire, and burning with the fury of a volcano.

The Scenea looked serious. The barn was gone beyond all hope. The whole structure was like touchwood, and the efforts of both parties could not have saved it.

Fortunately all the live stock were absent, so that none of them could be made to undergo this terrible fate; but the great peril was that the house might catch fire, and leave the fugitives no recourse but to suffer the most dreadful of deaths either from the Indians or the fire.

The barn and dwelling were just close enough to make it uncertain whether the latter would catch fire or not. If the wind blew toward it, it could not fail to do so; if it blew from it, there was no danger; if there was a dead calm, the prospect was very dubious.

The hurried manner in which the whites had been driven into their refuge left them no time to think of any of the emergencies which might arise. Present safety was the only thought that entered their heads.

Thus it occurred, that when they found themselves compelled to confront this appalling calamity, an investigation proved that there were no more than a couple of gallons of water in the house, a quantity not to be regarded under the circumstances.

Still further, the building was without any trap-door, through which any one might dash water to subdue the flames, or pass out to tear off the shingles.

Should a single jet of flame touch the roof for a moment, the whole matter was ended. The dwelling was doomed and so were its inmates!

With white lips and painfully beating hearts the little company gathered on the side nearest the barn, and watched the conflagration. The Mohawks, exultant and complaisant, did not hesitate to come forth and show themselves.

"If we have got to go, we may as well take some of them with us," said Mr. Kingslake, proceeding to select his target. The Seneca gave his assent to this, and the others imitated him.

The discharge that followed was a most murderous one, and scattered the surviving Iroquois as effectually as if a bombshell had exploded in their midst, and it afforded our friends the slight satisfaction to think that they had partially avenged their coming fate.

But now, while every tongue was silent, while the dark Seneca was moodily looking for some further chance to avenge himself upon the Mohawks, while all was despair, and the females were calmly preparing to meet their God—now came a most unlooked-for deliverance.

The change in their prospects was first signalled by an expressive "Ugh!" from Mintu.

"What is it?" inquired young Vreeland.

"Good!"

"What is good?"

"De wind—he come right."

"And, O gracious! just what I've been prayin' for ever since we lie here," said Jim, who hitherto had scarcely opened his mouth except to give a groan of misery.

The wind, which up to this time had been scarcely perceptible, now set in quite strongly, and blew steadily and directly from the building toward the barn. As long as this lasted, they were safe.

"But how long will this be?" asked our friends, trembling at the very revival of hope.

"Ugh! two—three—four hours!"

"Saved! saved! saved!" exclaimed young Vreeland, dancing around the room like one mad, while young Kingslake caught Edith to his breast and kissed her again and again. Jim rolled on the floor with delight, and the older portion of the party could scarcely keep back their tears.

"Let us not be in too great a hurry to rejoice," admonished Mr. Vreeland; "we are not yet out of danger. Let us restrain ourselves until our enemies are gone."

"But there can be no fate like the one which we have just escaped," said Mrs. Vreeland.

"I don't know about that," was the significant reply. "If I had my choice, I think I should prefer burning to death to capture by the Indians."

"Von Waddleyauh seems to enjoy himself well enough," said Mrs. Kingslake, laughing.

"He doesn't realize the danger. They have taken him back out of sight. Who knows what is going on there?"

"If they were putting him to much inconvenience, he would not be long in notifying us. He has a powerful pair of lungs, and is not backward in using them."

Mr. Kingslake shook his head. He did not like this jesting at such a solemn time. Too fearful a peril still hung over them.

"A swift blow from their tomahawk, would give little time for any outcry upon his part. So long as these redskins are anywhere in the neighborhood, just so long are we in danger."

"Dat right—much wise," was the indorsement of the Seneca.

"Of course, we cannot pretend to relax our vigilance," said Mr. Vreeland. "These savages are too fertile in treachery and stratagem, to make us feel safe, so long as they hold out. So long as they remain, it is for one purpose only."

At this instant, an exclamation from the Seneca announced another discovery. He had been continually passing around the building, ever watchful and alert, and he now went on the side opposite from that of the Indians.

His discovery was soon made known. A party of white

men, numbering some five or six, stood on the edge of a piece of wood, looking toward the building, as if in doubt whether to come forward or not.

Could these be communicated with, and brought to the assistance of our friends, the siege would be raised, and the rout of the Mohawks made complete.

But how was this to be done? The whites, unused to Indian warfare, could not be expected to understand any signal that might be made from the building. To secure their assistance, it was necessary that they should be directly and plainly informed of what was wanted.

Miutu debated whether it was best for him to steal from the building, and hasten to them; but he knew the safety of his friends would be too greatly jeopardized by his absence, and he finally told them what was required.

Young Vreeland and Kingslake instantly volunteered, and each contended so strenuously for the privilege, that Miutu was compelled to decide between them. He took the latter.

There were no Iroquois, so far as could be seen, except in the direction of the barn. Affairs there seemed wholly to take their attention. Yet, to be sure in the matter, the Iroquois arranged that his friends should keep their notice, while he went below with Kingslake, to arrange the adventure.

Elith Vreeland joined the two, her looks and manner showing too plainly how great was her fear.

All being ready, those above began firing, and when the proper moment arrived, the Seneca cautiously opened the door, just sufficient to admit the passage of a man's body.

"Good-bye! God bless you!" exclaimed young Kingslake, pressing the girl to his heart. She could make no reply, but only returned the kiss and embrace, and the next moment he was gone.

The Seneca stood, rifle in hand, ready to shoot the first who sought to pursue the courier. The course of the latter was such, that he could not take advantage of the wall, but was forced to take a course parallel to and about a rod from it.

He had gone a hundred yards or so, when a yell proclaimed that he was discovered, and a moment later a Mohawk shot by the house in pursuit. He was scarcely in sight when he fell dead from the bullet of the Seneca's rifle. Ere the latter could reload, three more passed, and the contest now became solely one between them and young Kingslake.

How intently the party in the house watched the chase! Our hero ran with great speed, but finding the Indians gaining, he changed his course, and started for the woods.

The brave men, in quest of whom he had ventured forth, seeing the savages coming, turned and ran for life. Deprived thus of their expected assistance, what hope remained either for those within or him who was now a fugitive through the woods, pursued by three vengeful Iroquois?

CHAPTER VI.

At this critical moment, a party of Iroquois, numbering nearly a dozen, appeared in the road opposite the Vreeland house. Where they came from could not be told, for they were upon the scene of action as suddenly as if they had risen from the very ground at their feet.

They stood a short time, as if in argument, while their frequent and excited gesticulations proved that some important matter was being discussed.

Finally, one of their number gave utterance to a tremulous whoop, which was repeated three times. It was answered from the vicinity of the house, when all the Mohawks instantly took their departure and rejoined those in the road. Here followed a few more moments' debate, and then the entire party left.

Miatu announced that their siege was ended.

For the space of over an hour, no one dared to leave his station or to relax his vigilance. At the end of that time, the

Seneca stole out and spent a full hour in reconnoitering the premises. When he returned, he stated that the nearest hostile savage was beyond sight and hearing.

Minata was right. The invasion of this portion of the Mohawk Valley ended as suddenly as it began. It raged with great fierceness in another direction; but the leaders of the expedition judged it prudent to withdraw their warriors from this neighborhood; and, having inflicted a great amount of evil, they left.

Feeling thus assured by the statement of the Seneca, our friends quit their stations, and came forth. Their first act was to examine the barn, or rather its ruins. It was entirely destroyed, so that nothing remained but a mass of lurid embers.

While the fate of Edward Kingslake was in doubt, young Vreckend hurried across the field to learn whether his home had been desolated. He came back at the end of a half-hour with the pleasing news, that it had not been disturbed.

As is often the case in times of peril, the Kingslakes, while adopting the course which apparently offered the most safety, forsook the one that was really most secure. The Mohawks had passed by their house, not pausing long enough to fire it.

Their own personal danger being ended, the distress of the company now was regarding the safety of young Kingslake, who had risked his life so courageously. When last seen, he was fleeing before three swift-footed Iroquois, through a piece of open woods, that scarcely afforded any more security than did the open fields.

At the earnest appeal of all, the Seneca started to learn his fate, agreeing not to come back without intelligence of the fugitive.

In his absence, our friends made an examination of the premises, to see what other injuries had been inflicted beside the great one of burning the barn. To their relief, the Iroquois had carried away with them the dead bodies of their comrades, so that this painful sight was saved them.

The interior of the milk-house had been rather roughly used,

but there was no damage worth the mention. An examination of the other building revealed nothing more.

The party had again gathered in front of the house, sad and heart-weary about their beloved friend, regarding whom they had reason for the most distressing anxiety.

Edith Vreeland was pale and trembling, calm and tearful by turns. She, poor girl, was convinced in her own mind that it was all over with him. Her own heart told her so, and reason and argument could not change her conviction.

Mrs. Kingslake and Mrs. Vreeland were weeping continually. Both could prophesy nothing but the worst regarding him, and they could not restrain their grief until the return of the Seneca.

Young Vreeland wandered hither and yon, seeking to distract his mind by various little duties, and to make himself believe, when forced to think of his young friend, that he had reached safety by some daring exploit, worthy of such a noble and chivalrous youth.

The only objection to this view of the case (and that was a fatal one) was his prolonged absence. If really free from his pursuers, he would not be so long in making it known.

As for Jim, he wandered like one disconsolate. It cannot be said that he was much disquieted as to young Kingslake, for he had no special affection for him, but he was anxious that he might be found, in order to restore good humor to the party. He did not like to see them so gloomy and downcast; it was reflected upon him, which was particularly unpleasant.

All at once, when the party sat commiserating each other, a terrified exclamation was heard from Jim, and the next moment he came running toward them, his face fairly pale, and his whole frame quivering with terror.

"*Injins! Injins! Injins!*" he shouted, "dey are 'ut dar ahind de barn! seed 'em wid my own eyes!"

The party rushed into the house, fastened the doors, and seized their guns. Taking their stations as before, they stood

on the watch, expecting every moment to see their returning enemies make a rush for the door.

But as minute after minute wore away, and none appeared, they wondered what it all meant. They recalled the confident assertion of the Seneca that they had all departed and the danger was past, and they began to think that, possibly, Jim was mistaken.

"Did you see the Indians?" inquired Mr. Kinglake.

"Yes, sir, seed 'em wid my own eyes."

"How many?"

"Fourteen."

"Did you count them?"

"No; can't say I did, 'cause I can't count but four."

"How, then, do you know that there are fourteen of them?"

"I tink so; 'cause I counted one, den *four*, den *one*, den *tree*, den *five*, den *one*, den *tree*, den *two*; and, golly gracious! I tink dat must be perty nigh onto fourteen."

"It is somewhat above fourteen; but don't you think you counted some of them over twice?"

"O yes, ob course. I counted one Injin four times, den *tree* times, den *one*. I couldn't count *two* very well; I don't like dat number, so I counted him *four*, *tree*, *one*—dat de way I saw him."

"Rather uncertain, then, I should pronounce the number of the Mohawks. You say you saw them yourself, Jim?"

"O yes, ob course; dat is, I perty near seed 'em!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I seed de place whar dey was."

"And where was that?"

"In de pigpen."

"And how do you know that they are really there? it may have been the pigs you heard."

"No, it won't; 'cause I let de pigs out dis morning; and den I heard dese Injins talking 'bout burning down de house and *shootin'* all de white folks, 'clouding myself."

"Golly gracious, no! dey talk Injin de biggest kind ob style. Dey spread demselves on dat."

"How were you able, then, to tell what they said? Do you understand the Mohawk tongue?"

"No, sah; but de words sounded to me as if dey said dat."

By this time the value of Jim's testimony was pretty thoroughly understood, and the company had come to the belief that there were no Indians at all to fear. Yet, not to throw away their safety, they descended to the lower story, and remained with arms in their hands while Horace Vreeland and Jim went forth to investigate the facts as to the return of the Iroquois.

"Tell you dey are dar," repeated the negro vehemently; "know it suah."

"Don't make so much noise about it, then, or they will hear you."

"Who cares? Who's afraid?" demanded the negro, boastfully, taking care, however, to linger in the rear of his young master, as they came nigh the place where he had asserted that the formidable body of savages had ensconced themselves.

"Right dar is de place," repeated Jim, in a quavering voice. "Right dar is where dey am waiting dis minute to scalp us all."

It cannot be said that Vreeland was entirely free from fear as he neared the spot. The confident and repeated assertions of Jim that there were really savages there made him somewhat uneasy; but as he was so great an exaggerator, to use a term so mild as to be scarcely allowable, there could be no reliance placed upon his word.

Vreeland held his gun ready cocked, and approached very stealthily until within about a rod, when he suddenly became conscious that there was something in the pen. Thrust in the crevices between the boards he saw a body move as if shifting its position.

The natural supposition, under other circumstances, would have been that what he saw were the usual denizens of the place—pigs; but he knew as well as Jim that this could not

be possible, as he had himself seen the negro set the swine loose that very morning; and had they been there during the proximity of the Indians, it is not to be supposed that the latter would have left one alive to "tell the tale."

He remained, however, to penetrate the mystery at once, he advanced very resolutely, yet cautiously, to the edge of the pen. At this instant there was a terrible commotion inside, and the next moment, not a bloodthirsty Mohawk, but the round, rufous-faced face of Hans Von Waldleyaah rose, like the full moon, to view.

"Dooder and Blitzen! Le days goon?" he asked, looking furtively around him.

"Do you mean the Indians?"

"Yaw, I means him."

"Yes, they are gone."

"Dood I cooms out and shows myself. De women folks must feels very bad, 'cause I stays away so long. Yaw, I cooms out."

And Hans clambered over the boards, and returned with the party to the house.

CHAPTER VII.

HANS VAN WALDELEYAUAH had a singular escape from the Indians, and one that reflected somewhat creditably upon himself.

His unobtrusive good humor, the hospitality which he showed when in the mill-house, and his apparent simplicity and freedom from suspicion, inclined them to regard him with more indulgence than they would have shown to any other member of the party, excepting, possibly, the African, Jim.

He did not try to escape from them, taking care only, when the shots were fired, to see that his body was safely sheltered from the whizzing bullets. Once or twice, when some of the Mohawks fell, the survivors glanced at him, as though anxious

to avenge themselves, but he was so blissfully unconscious of his danger that they allowed him to remain so.

All this time Hans was keeping a sharp eye upon his situation. When he fled to shelter, during the interchange of shots, he managed to get away from the Indians as far as he dared, without causing suspicion. When the barn was fired, he had good excuse for staying near it, and he was permitted to do so without question.

Still he saw no instant likelihood of his eluding his captors, lax as was their vigilance. He could not hope to do any thing by running, for his body was too heavy, and his legs were too short.

He had strong thoughts of pulling away a large stone in the foundation of the barn, and crawling beneath, replacing the stone and holding it there; but then, as the barn was already burning, his situation would be any thing but improved.

While he was thinking over this weighty matter, a most fortunate diversion took place in the discovery of young Kingslake's flight and the pursuit. When the attention of all was drawn toward this, he concluded that the golden moment had come, and he accordingly clambered over the boards into the pen in such haste that he dropped on his back in the trough, and came very near wedging himself fast. Struggling free, he crept to the opposite corner, and, covering himself with the straw, listened anxiously to the movements around him.

His absence seemed unnoticed, or, if observed, it created little concern, as the Iroquois did not deem Lina worth the trouble of hunting for.

But Van Waddeyah ran great risk from an unexpected direction. As the conflagration of the barn progressed, the heat became so great that his refuge was in great danger of taking fire. He began to perspire in every pore, and prayed earnestly that, inasmuch as the barn was on fire, it would hurry and burn down.

Suddenly a spark dropped upon the straw which covered him and set it on fire. Now commenced a furious rolling and

struggling, intended to subdue the flame, and so vigorously was it continued, that it succeeded, and Von Wadleyarth was once more left to the enjoyment of his refuge.

This was the last real danger that came to the Dutchman. The Indians finally went away, as stated in another place. He, not knowing this, remained hid until he was aroused by the approach of the negro Jim and Horace Vreeland. He was certain they were his enemies, until he recognized their voices, when he came forth one of the happiest of mortals.

The little party made their way back to the house, when all felt that there was no need of further fear regarding their personal safety, and they gave over their watching.

Nothing new was wanting except the return of young Kingslake. The loss of the farm, although a heavy one, was not to be spoken of beside what many of their neighbors had suffered, and what they felt themselves in the loss of the young friend so nobly attached to all.

The prolonged absence of Kingslake filled the most helpful with the greatest fear. Vreeland believed that he had either been overtaken and massacred in the woods, or else carried away a prisoner.

There was little to choose between these two, as a captivity among the Indians could but be brief and with but one possible termination.

Vreeland's discomfort became so great, that he decided to go in quest of his young friend. He did not intend to make any extended search, but would follow on in pursuit, hoping to meet the returning Mitten and gather information from him, or perhaps he might be able to discover something that had escaped the vigilant eye of the savage, and that might indicate the fate of the fugitive.

Endowed with those prize-worthy feelings, the young man stated his intention to his friends, and with their earnest "good wishes" he started upon the journey.

Starting the wood at the very point where young Kingslake and his pursuers disappeared, Horace had no trouble in tracing

their course by the overturned leaves and torn shrubbery. It was evident that the chase had been a desperate one, and that both parties neglected no effort that could make it successful upon their part.

Vreeland walked very rapidly, his vision strained and his heart throbbing in the dread of coming upon the corpse of his dear friend. As the distance increased, he began to entertain a faint hope that, inasmuch as the pursued had held his own for so long a time, perhaps he had escaped altogether.

All at once he paused in blank dismay. He saw that his course was leading him toward a deep, rapid stream, and he felt that the crisis must have taken place upon its bank. There the fate of Edward Kingslake must have been decided!

A few minutes later he reached the bank of the stream. He scrutinized the shores narrowly, but could detect nothing unusual, or that would indicate what had occurred on the spot. As he came up, however, he either saw or fancied he saw a figure dart back out of sight.

This thought made him somewhat uneasy, as it was in perfect consonance with the Indian character, that some scout or runner should return upon the trail, to catch any unsuspecting follower like himself.

While he stood debating whether it was best to retreat or not, a footstep caught his ear, and turning, he beheld Miutu, the Seneca, before him.

"What come here?" asked the savage, in broken English.

"I am looking for our young friend, who fled from the Mohawks."

The Seneca shook his head.

"Have you seen any thing of him, Miutu!"

"No—he gone."

"What! dead! you do not mean that?"

The Indian bowed his head with a sad, solemn air, signifying that such was his meaning.

"Have you seen his body?"

"No—no see it."

"Then, why do you say that he is dead?"

"Miutu know he dead."

"No, no, no; he has fled from the Mohawks. He is yet in the woods, and may come back to us."

The Seneca shook his head, as if he pitied his living friend as much as his dead one.

"Where is he?" impatiently asked Horace.

"There!"

He pointed to the flowing stream as he spoke, and young Vreeland understood the reference. Kingslake was, then, drowned!

The Seneca now gave his reasons for making his statement. He showed marks on the bank, that clearly proved to him that there had been a fierce and protracted struggle between the combatants. The result had been that Kingslake was finally overcome and thrown into the stream. Miutu was so clear in his exposition, that Vreeland could but feel that he was right, and that it was vain further to entertain hope.

"But his body?" he asked.

The Seneca again shook his head.

"No find him—don't know."

"But we must search until we do find him—we cannot leave it alone in the wilderness a prey to wild animals."

"Me hunt long—no find him—he gone—look much—no find."

"But it shall be found," repeated Vreeland vehemently.

The Seneca seemed willing, and the two at once began the search. Some dozen rods or so below, where the stream made a sudden turn, the Indian managed, with the help of a fallen tree, to throw himself upon the opposite side, and the search was now carried on with such thoroughness, that there was no possibility of overlooking the body.

Hour after hour, and mile after mile, did the two pass down the stream in their hunt; and, as the day drew to a close, they both began to wonder what the morning could possibly be. If dead, it was hardly possible that it should float so far, with-

out catching at some of the windings of the stream, or in some of the overhanging bushes and undergrowth. When night came, the two encamped on the shore, with the intention of renewing the search in the morning. The night was a warm one in summer, and young Kingslake incurred no danger in the night air. As for the Seneca, he did not ask to be better lodged.

At the earliest dawn of day, Mintu was awake, and called across the stream to his friend. The latter by this time was sensible of a gnawing hunger, but he was resolved to press onward until something more was learned of his friend.

The two had gone but a short distance when an exclamation from the Seneca told a discovery. In answer to Vreeland's inquiries, he pointed to the ground, upon which some marks were visible. What was their precise meaning it was impossible to tell, admitting even that the young man possessed enough knowledge of woodcraft to read them aright.

Mintu said that it was useless to proceed further, and accordingly the two turned back. At the earliest chance he retraced his steps, and then stated that the Iroquois must have descended the stream in a canoe, or upon some floating object, for there were signs of their having landed. By the depth of the impressions of their feet, he judged that they were carrying some heavy body—unquestionably the dead form of Edward Kingslake.

The search was therefore ended, and the two made their way back to acquaint the sorrowing friends with the sad intelligence. Mintu, with characteristic delicacy, withdrew when within the vicinity of the house, and left the mournful duty to young Vreeland. He felt himself unable to perform it himself.

It was hard for Mr. Kingslake and his aged partner to give up their only son; it was a bitter blow indeed, but they bowed their heads and said: "Thy will be done, O Lord."

To Mr. and Mrs. Vreeland it was like the loss of one of their own children, and they mourned him long and bitterly. The grief of all was rendered more poignant by the reflection that

he had uselessly thrown away his life. Had he remained within, instead of venturing out, all would have passed through the terrible ordeal unscathed.

Edith did not start when she was acquainted with the sad tidings, as tenderly as it was possible for her affectionate brother to do. She merely remarked: "I expected it!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE invasion of this portion of the Mohawk Valley, of which we have spoken at some length, took place during a more serious period of the American Revolution. It proved so strongly the need that our struggling country had for her sons, that a large number of the young and middle-aged men who had remained at home up to this time, enlisted in the Continental army. Among these was Horace Vreeland. He served valiantly until peace was proclaimed, then came back to his home.

Comparatively few changes had occurred during his absence. His father had managed to replace the barn burned during the invasion, and he and his next neighbor, Mr. Kingslake, had cultivated their farms as well as it was possible for them to do, in the absence of their principal mainstay.

Van Wadsworth had entered the army directly after his young master, and, like all Dutchmen, made an excellent soldier. Both he and Vreeland passed through the war without a day's sickness, or receiving the slightest scratch.

On their return to the homestead, they found the old folks well, noticing only the change that five years had made in them. A little more bowed, a few more grey hairs, a softer, kinder beaming of the eye; these were the principal changes

that struck young Vreeland, as he came beneath the roof from which he had been absent so long.

But in Edith he observed the greatest difference, and it saddened his heart more than any thing else. The sparkle of her bright blue eye was subdued into a mild melancholy, her merry laugh was never heard, and there was a quiet despondent about her, that spoke more eloquently than could any thing else, of the great sorrow that may be said to have entered into her very soul.

The change in his sister was more painful to Horace than any thing else could possibly be. Having been wrought during his absence, it was plainer to him than it could be to those who were associated with her from day to day.

As he recalled Edith, previous to the terrible tragedy, it seemed as if so much sunlight had been taken from his home: the sun was ever under eclipse, and a dark shadow hovered over the earth, and held him in its chilling folds.

Only those upon whom some great life, sorrow has fallen, can fully appreciate the desolate condition of Edith Vreeland. On the very threshold of happiness, when about to be united to the only one whom she ever loved, who claimed, and received, and returned her full affections, he was taken from her by a violent and dreadful fate. She could never, never drive the dark shadow from her heart.

After the close of the war, time wore on in the Mohawk Valley, in a natural matter-of-fact manner, that can claim no special record at our hands. The only incident worth a reference, was regarding Mintu, the Seneca.

About a year previous to the opening of our narrative, he came back from a long hunting expedition, and, calling young Vreeland aside, stated that he had met the two Indians who had pursued Edward Kingslake. The third had been shot in battle. The survivors gave him the particulars of the affray.

The young man, finding he was losing ground, leaped toward the stream of which we have spoken, and, plunging into it, attempted to swim across; but encountering a floating log,

he clung to this and went with the current. The Iroquois, supposing that he had really crossed, made their way to the other side; but they failed to take up his trail again, and began searching the banks for it.

And here young King-lake made his fatal blunder. He had gained so much ground by changing his tactics, that he could have returned to the shore whence he started, and eluded his followers; but, as he believed that the house was still besieged, he had no place of safety to which he might go.

Accordingly, he kept down the current, until the Mohawks got the suspicion that he was swimming with it, when they started more rapidly down stream, and, coming in sight, fired and desperately wounded him. He was after pulled ashore, carried away with them, and died and was buried within a week.

It was not necessary the Fifth Vreeland, or the young man's parents, should learn the precise nature of his death. There was no need of reopening the wound. He had been buried, and time had mellowed the grief of the mourners. Why revive it, only to lacerate their hearts, and to bury it again in his lonely grave.

Time passed, until five years had come and gone. By this time it may be said that the Mohawk Valley had almost fully recovered from the desolation of the destroyer. The buildings burned had been rebuilt, the ashes that marked their ruins were but the bones that fertilized the soil already rich and lavish in its yield. The swelling fields of waving grain, the green sword, and the luxuriant strawberry, spoke not of the simoon-breath of war.

About this time, a new sensation appeared in this portion of the Mohawk Valley, where we have laid the scene of the events we seek to record. Wild stories and rumors spread in every direction, about the Phantom Horseman and the Haunted Wood. He was said to hunt over the road on his white horse with the speed of the wind, his long, white hair streaming behind him, his eyes glowing like living coals of fire, while from his mouth proceeded, at times, genuine flame.

He was always seen in nearly the same place; that is, somewhere along the road which led through the Haunted Wood, between the village of Millville and the farm of the Vrecklands. As yet he had been seen nowhere else.

Mary treated the story with undisguised contempt.

"The idea of a *phantom*!" sneered Deacon Jones, in the village store, where were gathered a dozen of the villagers, one evening, several weeks after the appearance of the dreaded creature in their neighborhood. "No person unless a child, or one who isn't exactly right in his upper story, can for a moment believe such a thing."

"But, Deacon, suppose a fellow has seen it?"

The good deacon threw his head higher than ever.

"Who has seen it?"

All eyes turned toward a little pinched-up, weathered faced shoemaker, Jimmy Stites.

"Stites saw it last night."

"Who said I did?" demanded Stites in high dudgeon. "It seems to me you have got a mighty lot to say about what's none of your business."

"There, Stites; there, there! that wont do. You know you were telling us a long yarn how you saw this dreadful creature, and how he came near catching you, and all that sort of thing."

"Well, what of it?"

"Why, don't try and back out, that's all."

"Who's trying to back out?"

"You act as if you were."

"It's no such thing; aint trying to do nothin' like it."

"You say, then, that what you told us about seeing the Phantom is all true?"

"In course I do!" fiercely exclaimed Stites, swelling almost to bursting in his wrath. "You don't s'pose I'd tell you an untruth about such a thing?"

"Well, yes," replied some one from behind the stove, the speaker managing to disguise his voice so that it could not be recognized. Stites sprang up and looked furiously around, as

if he would crush the man who dare thus insult him in the presence of his neighbors. But the offender could not be found, and he sank down in his chair again.

The truth of it was, the little shoemaker had no intention of retracting in the least the story he had told, regarding his vision of the Phantom Horseman; but being a humble member in Parson Irwin's church, and a great admirer of Deacon Jones, he had no desire of coming under that man's contempt. He thought it decidedly little in his neighbors, to single him out at such a time. They could just as well have let him alone, and said nothing at all while the Deacon was present. When he was absent, he was ready to answer any and all their questions.

"So you have seen this wonderful personage, that they call the Phantom Horseman, have you, Jimmy?" asked Deacon Jones, in his smiling way, that was a thousand times more trying than open ridicule.

"Deacon, do you think I would lie?" asked the shoemaker, sitting up straightening up, throwing both hands outward, and holding them in precisely the form that he would have done had he expected a baby to drop into his arms, and at the same time putting on an air of great earnestness.

"Why do you ask me that question, Jimmy? Have I ever accused you of such a thing?"

"No; I can't say, that you have, Deacon," he replied, considerably mollified by the manner of his friend.

"Why, then, do you seem so sensitive, when no such accusation has been made?"

"Well—Deacon!"—exclaimed the shoemaker, turning very red, and with the suppressed laughter of the company—"ahem! you know about this Phantom Horseman so much, that I expect you'll laugh at me."

"You have no right to think so."

"Well, the way was this way," began Sites, with visible confusion, as the eyes of all were turned upon him. "You see I've got one of the bestest wives in the world—mild, sweet-

tempered as an angel!—what are you snickering at, Jim Smith?"

"Nothing."

"Yes you be, too. What is it?"

"How did you get that scratch on your nose?"

"That—why—that—ahem! I ran against my awl—that's the way."

"Exactly; she is your *all*. Go on, Jim, I don't want to interrupt you."

The shoemaker would have done something desperate, had he been able to decide what that desperate thing should be. But he evidently concluded that it was impossible to do justice to it, and he didn't try, but resumed his narration:

"My wife always treats me with such kindness that I am willing to do any thing for her; and so, when she asked me the other night to go up to Mr. Vreeland's, and get a quart of their cream for the company that we expected next day, of course I couldn't refuse, but started right off.

"The only thing I was sorry about was that it was so late. Not that I was afraid, for there ain't nothing on this earth that can skeer me. Well, I went up to Mr. Vreeland's, got my cream, had a talk with them, and then started home.

"I never thought about the Phantom Horseman till I got down in the hollow in the woods, when the first thing I seen was him coming right out from under the bridge, on his horse. He had great, long hair, and his eyes were shooting fire.

" 'What you got there?' he asked.

" 'Nothing but some cream, that Mrs. Stiles wants to treat the company she expects to-morrow,' I said.

" 'Let's see it,' he said.

"Well, I was going to fight for it, when I thought, maybe, he might be hungry, so I handed it up to him, and he grabbed it down at one swallow, and then slammed the pail over my head, and rode off, and that's the last I seen of the Phantom Horseman."

CHAPTER IX.

"You say, Stites, that this gentleman of the Haunted Wood swallowed all your cream?" asked Deacon Jones, when the shoemaker had finished his narration.

"Yes, sir, I say that; he didn't leave a smitch of it; hardly enough to make it smell of cream."

"And you had a quart?"

"That's what I asked for, and I don't s'pose Mrs. Vreeland is the woman to cheat a feller."

Here Stites perceived that he was running into a trap, but he skillfully whisked by it.

"You see—Jenny!—the fact was I was a little dry myself, and I took a pull at it just before meeting this—ahem!—ghost."

Deacon Jones leaned back, placed his hands against his sides, and laughed long and heartily, while the others joined him, and the shoemaker lit a short, black pipe, and smoked with might and main, apparently as unconscious of the presence of any one as if he were really alone.

"None, Jenny," continued Deacon Jones from his seat on the wooden stool, shaking his long finger toward him, and looking half in earnest, half in jest; "now, Jenny, upon honor, didn't you *swallow all* the cream yourself?"

"Just what I told you," exclaimed the shoemaker, drawing around and about himself with fury. "Didn't I tell you you wouldn't believe me?"

"Hush now, Jenny; hush now, Jenny," called out the Deacon, waving him to his seat. "I only ask you the question. Answer me, yes or no. Did you not swallow that cream yourself?"

"No!" fairly shouted Stites.

"I am glad to hear you say so, for it proves how absurd the whole theory of a ghost, or poltergeist, or bogoblin, or what-

ever you please to term it, is. Spirits are immaterial—that is, they have no substance. Now, on the unimpeachable testimony of Mr. Stites, we have proof that this phantom has a tremendous appetite. This is a state of affairs which cannot be reconciled with the idea of a phantom.”

This argument, which was intended completely to demolish the belief of those present, was in a fair way of success when it itself was scattered to the winds by no less a personage than Jimmy Stites, who, under the spur of ridicule, rallied handsomely to his own defense:

“Now, Deacon Jones, I s’pose you think you’ve got up a mighty smart argument, but you was never more mistook in your life. None of us is fools enough to s’pose for one minute that this ‘ere Phantom Horseman is a regular spirit, or shabber, that goes flying through the air like a cloud.

“No, sir; it’s what I call a *half-spirit*—that is, a creature that has the power to kill, to eat, to fight, to talk, to ride horses, and to swallow cream; but, *at the same time*, it’s a *spirit*. It can come and go just like any other ghost, and is ten million times worser, ’cause its got the power of both man and spirit—that’s what it is.”

The expression of all the faces showed that Jimmy Stites carried his audience with him. He had brought out their ideas exactly, and it may be remarked too, in passing, he stated the belief of nearly all who entertained any belief at all in regard to this mysterious personage. It was not that he was a faint, ethereal, ghostly visitant, coming and going like the sunlight, but that he was a human being gifted with supernatural power.

“You describe something unknown in nature,” pursued the Deacon, vainly trying to gain the ground he had lost. “Whoever heard of such a personage?”

“Nobody, tild the Phantom Horseman came around; then I reckon a few of us heard of him.”

Deacon Jones laughed good-naturedly, for he saw that the shoemaker ~~had~~ defeated him in the opinion of his hearers.

There was scarcely a person present, excepting himself, but what firmly believed in this extraordinary being. There might be some who were ashamed to avow their faith, but it was nevertheless certain. They listened, with staring eyes and gaping mouths, to the numerous tales that were told at the village tavern, and in the stores.

There was scarcely any account too monstrous to believe. Even when Jared Jagger-gins, the greatest boaster and fastidier in the village, had his version to give, he found not a few believers. That he had seen the Phantom Horseman and his steed come out of the earth, in the midst of a blue flame—that he had displayed a cloven foot, and emitted a smell of brimstone—that he had shot a stream of fire from his eyes, of such intensity that he lit his pipe by it—that finally he had attacked Jared, and, after a fearful struggle, was repulsed; all this, we say, found not a few believers, as the people were in that precise state of mind in which they were prepared to believe *any thing* regarding this being, and the more incredible it, the more credulous they.

"Well, boys, I consider it mighty strange," remarked Mr. Gaston, the keeper of the store. "At first I was disposed to think as the Deacon does, and ridicule the whole thing; but I can tell you, gentlemen, when we hear of it all the time, and from such sources, we may well feel serious, and ask ourselves what it all means."

Mr. Gaston was shrewd; it wouldn't do to run counter to the decided opinions of anybody; there was no necessity of creating opposition, as he expressed it.

"Deacon, what time is it?" loudly inquired the shoemaker.

The latter produced his half-eye and announced:

"I should say about time we were going to our homes. It is past nine o'clock."

"There is nigh on a dozen of us, and I propose that we go up in the woods and get sight of this Phantom Horseman."

This proposition was warmly received, but Deacon Jones declared that he would be unable to accompany them, as he

had promised to be at his brother-in-law's at nine o'clock, to spend the remainder of the evening, and he was sure of being severely scolded for staying away so long as he had already done.

This produced some badinage upon the part of the others, and not a little was added to the laurels of the shoemaker, who declared that the Deacon was afraid to go and be convinced of the error he had made. The best humor, however, prevailed, and he promised to seek a fight of the dreadful object at the earliest opportunity.

If misery loves company, so does cowardice. The worth of the ladies would not have tempted a single member of that party to have gone alone over the "haunted road," at midnight. It would have required a large sum to have induced two or even three to do it; but, when you come to ten or a dozen together, that was a far different matter.

There was no hesitancy upon the part of any. All were rather anxious to join the expedition. There was a smack of adventure about it that made it attractive, especially to the younger portion.

"Shall we go armed?" asked one of the members.

"Armed! no; what in the name of sense do we want of arms? A dozen of us against a single person is bad enough, without taking loaded guns or pistols."

This was given in rather good-liequent style by Stiles, the shoemaker, and succeeded partly in creating a good impression of his own prowess, which he intended it should do.

It was decided unworthy of the enlightened and courageous company which set out to solve this mystery, that they should go armed against a single person.

"But," continued one of the company, "you say this thing has supernatural power. Doesn't that make it wise enough for us to go prepared?"

"Just such a fool, Tony Roberts, as I know'd you always was. If it's supernatural, what good will it do to fire our guns at it; eh, you numbskull?"

This was an extinguisher, and henceforth Tony Roberts preserved silence.

Little or no preparation was necessary. They had only to wait until it was a little later, so as not to reach the gorge too soon.

Precisely at half-past ten, a party, numbering eleven persons, filed out of the village and took a direction toward the haunted woods.

On the outskirts of Milville, was the little port-looking cabin of Sikes, the miller or shoemaker, as he was termed. It was surrounded and inclosed in shrubbery, from which it peered up with a sorry, impudent air, somewhat after the manner of a sitting hen, when aroused by the approach of some danger.

As the party drew near the house, it was observed that Sikes shrunk to the opposite side, and tried to keep the body of big Jim Maggins between him and the house.

"Don't make any noise, boys," he said, in tremulous tones, as they advanced.

"Why not, Jimmy?"

"The old woman is asleep, and I'm afraid you'll disturb her."

"No, she isn't either. Yonder she stands at the gate, with a broom in her hand."

Sure enough. The light-up, head and shoulders of Mrs. Sikes, and the handle of a broom, were visible at the little gate that opened into the street. She seemed to have heard the approach of the party, and was peering forth to see whether her "man" was among them.

"O boys, don't let her know I'm here," quivered Sikes, as he observed her. Maggins promised to shield him from observation, and the others were too anxious for the shoemaker's company to betray him into the hands of his tormentant wife.

"Is James there?" she called out in the shrillest of voices, as the party came up.

"What James do you mean?"

"Why, *my James*, Sam Whiley."

"O, little Jimmy, the shoemaker. He left the store some time ago. Mrs. Stiles, you must be kind to Jimmy when he comes home, for he was praising you when we left."

"Y-a-s," drawled Mrs. Stiles, with an indescribable expression; "I'll pra-i-s-e him when he comes home—staying out this time o' night, and the baby sick with the measles."

Our friends were soon beyond the village, and silently nearing the haunted woods, which was said to be the retreat of the famous "Phantom Horseman." All voices were hushed, as they entered into the dark shadows, and they shrank closer together, as if for mutual safety.

Jim Maggens essayed a whistle, but it sounded so dismal that he finally ceased, and they went forward, as if they were so many phantoms themselves.

Shortly after entering the wood, they reached the bridge, of which frequent mention has been made.

"Is this the place?" asked one.

"No—gracious! I don't know but what it is," replied Stiles, in great trepidation. "Yes, sir, here is the hollow, and there is where he sot and swallowed my cream."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir—O heavens o' nath! see there!"

From the opposite side of the bridge, a large round head was seen slowly to rise, with great eyes, enormous nose, and vast mouth, all glowing with fire, and looking more terrible than any sight they had ever beheld.

One phrased howl from a h, and away they scrambled, heels over head, stumbling, rolling, half frantic, only anxious to get away—away. The dreadful thing did not follow them, but remained visible until they were far beyond sight.

When they were fairly gone, the head sank quickly down, and two forms that bore a close resemblance to Deacon Jones and his brother-in-law, might have been seen cautiously making their way down the road. They were laughing very heartily, and the deacon remarked:

"We must take it away with us, for it won't do to let them know they were frightened by a hollow pumpkin."

CHAPTER X

THE excitement about the Haunted Wood, and the Phantom Horseman, continued to increase.

We have told, at the beginning of this narrative, how Deacon Jones became converted from his unbelief. Ocular proof is so conclusive that there are few, if any, who can resist it; and, shortly after the radical change in his opinion, his brother-in-law went through the same process.

It was not long before it became rarer to find those who had *not* seen the Phantom, than it was to find those who had. There were still a few who held out, and treated the matter as a farce from beginning to end.

Among the latter were both Mr. Kingslake and Vreeland, who did not hesitate to express their contempt, at any and all times, and in such a forcible manner that they often gave offence to those who were honest in their sentiments.

But now arose a more startling rumor than ever. One night, the Phantom Horseman was seen in the gorge in the woods, and at precisely the same time a second phantom was discerned by Deacon Jones, fully two miles away. If there were possibly any confusion regarding the time, there certainly could be none concerning the creatures themselves.

The Phantom Horseman was rather tall, and of fine form, while the Phantom Footman, as he may be termed, for he was never seen mounted, was rather short of stature, and somewhat clumsy in his movements.

The latter was first seen by Deacon Jones, not very late one summer evening, some distance from the woods. Fortunately the Deacon had his wife, a woman as sensible and strong-

muddled as himself, with him, and her confirmation of what was seen placed the matter beyond all cavil.

They were driving at a walk, when they observed what they took to be a man in the road coming toward them. The Deacon kept his eye upon him, for it was rather late and he wished to identify him, if one of his neighbors.

All at once a phosphorescent light gleamed from the head, shoulders, and sides of the figure, until it seemed literally in one blaze. Still the Deacon was more curious than surprised, and he was scrutinizing the figure to see whether there was really any attempt at deception, when his horse became so terrified that it required his whole effort to control him.

Mrs. Jones, so far as possible, kept her eye upon the mysterious figure. It stood quietly in the center of the road, as immovable as a statue; and, as the horse was reined aside, he galloped by, snorting with terror. She looked back, after they passed, and saw it seemingly waving from side to side, as if swung, censer-like, by some power other than its own. The oscillations continued until the figure seemed to be wafted like a shadow from their view.

It was this latter statement that gave the thing a supernatural character in the eyes of Deacon Jones. Although mystified, he was still willing to believe that he had been deluded by some skillful manipulator, somewhat after the manner that he had assisted to deceive Stiles, the shoemaker, and his little party. But that waving pendulum-like motion was something, he thought, unattainable by man.

"Betsey," said the Deacon, after they had left the Phantom Footman far behind, and were going along once more, at the slow, joggling trot, more natural to the mare than a walk would have been; "Betsey, do you know I am beginning to be sorely troubled."

"What about, Jacob?"

"This ghost business—for it is nothing else. Until a week or two since, the Apostle Paul was never more earnest in his denunciation of the early Christians, than I was in my crusade

against the believers in this Phantom Horseman. I do really believe I make a good deal of personal dislike, by my reticence of the matter."

"True, Jacob, but there are Mr. Vineland, and Kingslake, and others, who are still as disbelieving as you ever were."

"Yes," assented the husband, "it will require precisely the same means to change their views as it did to change mine, and I hope they will be gratified very speedily with what they seem so earnestly to desire." But, Betsey, can there really be such things as ghosts?"

"The Witch of Endor."

"That is always the answer of the ignorant in such matters, not applying the remark, my dear, to you. But in the early days of the world, when God and his angels visited the earth, miracles and direct divine interpositions took place - the occurrences of those days, I say, are not justifiably quoted, when relating to the strange events of our own. No; I cannot feel right on the question."

One evening, the Deacon and his family, and Mr. Kingslake and his wife, were at Mr. Vineland's, spending the evening in social intercourse, after partaking of tea. As a matter of course, the phantoms came up for the principal theme of conversation.

The Deacon had just been rallied by his friends upon his sudden change of opinion, and he was good-naturedly and bravely defending himself.

"Nothing is so common," he retorted. "I would I have been the more foolish to have refused the evidence of my own eyes. I only ask that you go through the same experience that I in, and still hold to your opinion."

"Can't you assist me to gain an interview with this hob-goblin?" asked Mr. Kingslake. "As he seems to have turned the heads of nearly everybody, I am really getting anxious to find out what sort of a being he is."

"I am sure you have heard often enough."

"That's just it; I have heard too much. I prefer to see something for myself."

"If you are really anxious to meet the Phantom Horseman, take a midnight ride through the Haunted Wood, some night, and the chances are very strongly in favor of your being gratified."

"Vreeland, what do you say?" asked Mr. Kingslake, turning toward his neighbor.

"I am ready."

"It's a bargain, then, and you will accompany us, Deacon."

"No, sir; I don't do any such thing. I want you two unbelievers to see this without any bias from my presence. What you then report, as having seen, we shall all believe."

"But this Phantom Footman: this seems to be as ghostlike as the other."

The Deacon, by a nod of his head, signified that such, in his opinion, was the case.

"Our neighborhood is becoming specially favored," said Mr. Vreeland. "If matters continue to go on in this manner, the time will come when none but ghosts and hobgoblins live here, and we shall have to vacate the premises."

At this instant a terrible scream was heard, and all started for their seats and gazed in each other's faces.

"Who is it?" was the question either asked or expressed.

"It is mother," replied Edith.

The three men instantly darted out of the house, and started in the direction from which the sound came. They met Mrs. Vreeland, white, and so trembling that she was scarcely able to stand.

"What is the matter? what is the matter?" asked her husband and the Deacon, as they took her arms, and helped her forward.

"I've seen it! I've seen it!"

"What? seen what?"

"THE GHOST!"

"Where?" demanded Mr. Kingslake, stopping short and bristling up.

"Down there; right by the milk-house."

"Let me meet it."

He strode angrily away, and passed around the milk house several times, then looked carefully in, and examined the surrounding premises, but nothing was to be seen of the strange visitor which had so terrified Mrs. Vreeland. Had there been any thing human, upon which he could have vented his wrath, it would have fared badly.

Hoping his wife in the house, Mr. Vreeland and the Deacon came running back.

"Have you seen it? have you seen it?"

"No; heavens! no."

"Look yonder!" exclaimed Deacon Jones, pointing toward the upper portion of the field.

Following the direction indicated, a dark body, apparently on fire, was seen, as if it was floating through the air toward the woods.

"Let's follow it!" exclaimed Mr. Kingslake, hurrying impulsively toward it.

"Wait a moment," said Mr. Vreeland; "let me get my gun." Rushing into the house, he speedily returned with the weapon, and the three started on a run in the direction of the fast-vanishing Phantom Footman.

As they came near the latter, Mr. Kingslake called attention to the fact that instead of "waving" through the air, it was using a pair of legs to the best of its ability. Yet, from some cause or other, it was getting over the ground so slowly, that our three friends were gaining very rapidly upon it.

"Halt!" called Mr. Vreeland, "or I fire!"

Instead of halting, the Phantom Footman redoubled its efforts, striving to the utmost to reach the sheltering corner of the woods. But all in vain; in the next two minutes the persons had lessened the intervening distance to a hundred feet.

"Halt! I command you, for the last time!" called out Mr. Vredendyk, stepping to a walk, and holding his gun. His gun was unloaded, and raising his index, he discharged it. The figure dropped flat to the earth.

"You have committed murder!" exclaimed the horror-struck Deacon Jones.

"No I haven't, I fired ten feet over his head on purpose to frighten him."

"O mein Gott! doozer an' blizzer!" groaned the prostrate figure as they came up; "I'm dead, blowed all to pieces."

The next minute the identity of the Phantom Horseman was revealed. Hans Von Waldenburgh, to cover his raids upon the pies and puddings of his employer, had adopted this attire; and, finding it succeed far better than he ever anticipated, he had extended his ghostly visits to other portions of the neighborhood. A few tallow candles stuck in different parts of his clothes, which he disguised somewhat, and the aid of a little phosphorus, were all that he required. The excited imaginations of his spectators supplied every thing else, in the shape of waving, floating, spectral appearance, and equally sudden disappearance.

CHAPTER XI.

At this point in our narrative, a new character claims our notice.

Joshua Crane was the only son of a well-to-do farmer, living a couple of miles from the village of Millington, in a different direction from that where the incidents already related are supposed to have occurred. He was now twenty-six years of age, six feet three inches high, thin, almost to emaciation, with a large Roman nose, yellow hair, and an uncleanly, straggly whiskers of the same sandy hue as his complexion.

He was entirely uneducated, as regards book-learning, his parents having bitterly opposed throwing money away on "school-masters;" and, as a consequence, he grew up with an unshaken contempt for books and those who made any pretense of understanding them.

During the Indian invasion of the Mohawk Valley, upon which we have not at considerable length in another place, from some reason never understood—It, indeed, there was any reason at all—the farm of the Cranes was untouched. Josiah, senior, and his wife, and Josiah, junior, took to the woods, where they could tell of danger had passed.

When they came shuddingly forth, they found every thing precisely as it was left by them. Not a horse, cow, pig, or even a chicken, had been disturbed. They met peace, not war.

For several years, Josiah Crane had entertained the most unbounded hope for Edith Vreeland. He kept it hid for the first year or two, and when he came to know that the day for her wedding with Edward Kingslake had been fixed, he suddenly gave up the great dream in which he had revelled for so long a time, and calmly and firmly resolved to live and die an old bachelor.

When, however, the Indian invasion took this insuperable difficulty from his path, his passion returned with ten-fold strength, and he straightway resolved that she should be his, if he had "to die for it."

Old Mr. Crane and his wife had long looked upon Edith Vreeland as the only girl in the Mohawk Valley that was worthy of becoming their daughter-in-law. She had enough "business" to manage the book-accounts herself, and when "them book-keepers' notions and quitters get mixed up in your head, and could straighten 'em all out when."

Then, Edith could turn out some, some of the best, chum butter, and the finest, and make herself useful upon all occasions, while her beauty made her just the one to stand beside the tall, dignified Josiah, as his life partner.

Josiah Crane had served a short time at the siege of Fort

Stewart, and was quite vain of his military career. He was the heir to the broad acres of his father, as Edith was, in part to those of her parents, and thus, take it from any point of view you chose, the match was a "megalomaniac" one; that is, according to those who dwell upon the Crane family.

Poor, gentle Edith Vreeland was for a long time in ignorance of the special ambition of Crane, and would have remained so a much longer while had not her brother Horace told her of it. He had had his suspicions aroused from several causes.

Edith, having been warned, was much afraid of meeting young Mr. Crane, but she had no knowledge of the precise time he had fixed, upon which to make his *début* into her affections. She looked upon Horace's statement of his proposed visit upon Sunday evening as a piece of pleasantry upon his part, not intended to be accepted as actual fact.

Great, therefore, was her amazement, when, just at dusk, as she sat at the porch, she saw a carriage come down the road in a cloud of dust, and round to, and bear up the lane with a great flourish. She was about to remark upon the appearance of this stranger, when she recognized the face and form of Josiah Crane. She turned toward her brother, in black dismay, but he only met her with a quiet, meaning smile.

It chanced that the negro Jim and Van Wadley (the latter of whom had been very quiet since his phantom propensities had been exploded), stood at the head of the lane, smoking and chatting.

"See here, you Dutchman, you take care that horse!" called out Mr. Crane, as he leaped from his carriage and started for the house.

"Yaw; you lets te carriage stand dere till I puts him away."

"Be quick about it."

"Yaw."

It may be remarked here, that when Mr. Crane emerged

from the house, a few hours later, he found the horse and carriage standing precisely as he had left it, while Hans was and had been for two hours in bed.

Mr. Crane walked straight to the porch, said "good evening," and occupied the position seat. As a matter of course, he was treated with respect by both old and young. His room, especially, seemed anxious to entertain him, and made himself as agreeable as possible.

As the evening progressed, Mr. and Mrs. Vreeland bade the younger portion good night and withdrew. Edith expected, as a matter of course, that her brother would remain. What, therefore, was her indignation, when, not a half-hour later, he followed suit and left the two alone! She sought to restrain him, but he did not heed her, and, at a comparatively early hour of this beautiful summer evening, she found herself alone with the one who, of all others, she most dreaded.

The couple had sat for a short time conversing on general topics when Julian placed himself directly beside her. She moved away, and he followed her, and made an effort to take one of her hands. She prevented this, but she could not keep him at a satisfactory distance until he said:

"If you do not remain in your seat I shall go in the house and leave you alone."

Mr. Crane looked around a moment, and then deliberately placed his chair against the door, and replied:

"No, you won't either."

"And why not?"

"I rather reckon I'm a bit the stronger."

"Would you prevent me if I should try?"

"I rather reckon I would. If you don't think so, just try it; that's all."

Edith concluded that it was hardly advisable to make the attempt just then. She tried to interest him in a general conversation, but he was too ignorant on all topics to allow this. He had come to "know," and that he meant to do. He would thrust himself beside her, and was constantly seeking to

put his arm around her waist. When she threatened to call her brother and father, he said, seemingly more in earnest than in joke, that he would put his hand over her mouth, so that she couldn't "yell."

This was rather rough courtship, and, as may be believed, the time passed heavily enough to poor Edith, but no doubt with increased rapidity to the ardent young swain. He coaxed, bullied, and threatened her, to induce her to allow him greater consideration. When at length, in the small hours of the night, the time came for him to take his leave, he seized her and stole a kiss before she could make the least resistance. She stood on the porch as he backed himself off.

"Mr. Crane——"

"Oh! now, call me '*Stash*,' " he interrupted.

"Mr. Crane, you will please understand that you are not to come here again, as no one wishes to see you."

"Good night, Edy; I'll be here about the same time next Sunday night."

CHAPTER XII

"If there ever was a girl in love, Edith Vreeland is in love with me!" was the soliloquy of Josiah Crane, as he started homeward in his carriage.

"The old woman is right in thinking we'll make a good match. We're just got up for each other, and I think I'd take her. In course, I must court her awhile, so as to let her see what points to admire about me, and I can get a pretty good idea of her. She was rather offish to-night, but then it's the first time, and it's to be expected that she should be a little afeared of me.

"I'll tame her, when I get her," he added, after a moment's silence. "I'll learn her what she must do and what she mustn't do. She hasn't found out who Josiah Crane is yet."

"I know the old folks would like to have me take her; and

as for her brother, he is half-crazy over the idea. I s'pose he thinks if he should get poor, I'd take care of him; but, umph! I should like to see me doing that! What's hers is to be mine, and nobody-else's."

Shortly after, Mr. Crane entered the Haunted Wood, through which he was to pass before reaching the highway that led to his own home. He was in such a delightful reverie regarding the girl that he had just lost, that he let his horse proceed at a slow walk, while he gave utterance to his meditations.

"She's the best girl I can find, and so I'll make up my mind to have her—~~and~~ I'll I believe you'll find a man in the road, walking the same way that I am."

He could just make out the figure of a person, in the dim candle-light, walking from him. He had caught glimpses of it occasionally for the last five or ten minutes, but had not become assured of its identity until just now.

"He's queer! this is a bad place to meet a man on a dark night!" muttered Josiah, a chill creeping over him, as his imagination conjured up all sorts of horrors. "What business has he to be out this time of night? Perhaps he has been on the same errand as me, and is just going home."

He tried to flatter himself with the belief that very probably such was the case, but he could not succeed.

Let the most courageous man unexpectedly meet a stranger on a lonely road, on a dim moonlight night, and he is sure to be startled. There is something in the uncertainty of the man's intentions, your total ignorance of his identity, that sets your imagination at work, and makes pictures that make you shudder in spite of yourself.

Josiah Crane reined his horse down to a slow walk, and pressed forward to see whether he could conjecture who the individual was. He was short and stout, and walked with a swinging gait, as if he were very old and fat.

There was just enough candle-light to make the figure discernible, but not enough to reveal any thing more.

"That's a mighty queer way of doing business," added

Josiah, in no little trepidation. "What does he want to stick in the middle of the road for? Why don't he turn aside and let a feller pass?"

He concluded quietly to draw up his horse, and allow the stranger to go on out of sight. Accordingly, he tightened the reins, and the well-trained animal stood still.

To his amazement and terror, the instant he stopped, the mysterious stranger did the same, and the two parties remained as motionless as a couple of statues.

"If that don't beat all!" was the whispered exclamation of Crane. "Who'd a thunk it?"

To test him, he held his horse still for fully five minutes. All that time the figure ahead of him could not be seen to move a limb.

By this time Crane was becoming thoroughly affrighted. There was an air of mystery about the whole thing that annoyed him terribly. He could not conceive of any reason why any person should act in this manner.

If the man were only mounted he would suspect his being the Phantom Horseman, but this, he decided, could not be the case, as the specter was never known to travel on foot.

If he were a highwayman, his conduct was still more inexplicable. Such a person would be inclined to spring out upon him from the roadside, without affording him a moment for preparation, but the one before him seemed to be courting observation.

"If I only had my musket with me," thought Crane, "wouldn't I give him blazes? I'd show him how we did things at Fort Stanwix!"

But he had no weapon, and it only remained for him to sit in his carriage all night, or to drive forward and see whether the stranger proposed to do the same or not.

"Hang it! I can't stay here forever. I expect the old man will raise old Nick now, because I've been out so long."

He chirruped softly to his horse, and jerked the reins lightly. As he stepped forward the man did the same, and the two

parties moved in the same manner that they did before the halt took place.

This was some relief to the young man, but he was still fearful that something would result from this mysterious proceeding. He almost wished for the appearance of the Phantom Horseman, that the stranger might be frightened or driven from the road long enough for him to get ahead of him.

A double fear now began to torment the young swain—a present terror regarding the personage in front of him, and a prospective terror of the wrath of his father, if he should see him returning so late in the morning.

The last fear was by no means an insignificant one. The old gentleman had a terrible temper, as all knew who were acquainted with him; and any one who crossed his path was pretty sure to rue it.

Although Josiah was legally of age, and had been so for a number of years, the old gentleman became totally oblivious of this fact, whenever his wrath was excited, and he did not hesitate to flog him as soundly as he did ten years before, when the boy was a foot less in stature.

He had given his son strict injunctions not to remain at Mr. Vreeland's later than ten o'clock, and had threatened to come after him if he was not in his bed by eleven at the latest. And here it was between two and three o'clock in the morning that he was returning from his first matrimonial call upon Miss Vreeland. His hair fairly rose on end as he reflected on the awful vial of wrath that was waiting to be uncorked.

"If the infernal thing would only walk a little faster; but it's no use. I hadn't oughter staid so long. Just my luck—allers to get into trouble. The time them Mohawk Injins come down here, five years ago, I run into the woods and tore my Sunday breeches all to pieces."

Suddenly it occurred to him that the being in front of him was no other than the Phantom Horseman himself. Who knew but what he sometimes regaled himself in perambulating over the country at the dead hour of midnight? Would not

this be just the plan to delude the people, who considered him and his horse inseparable.

If Josiah Crane had been frightened hitherto, he was now terrified. The thought of being so close, for such a length of time, to this horrid being, was appalling.

Of late, too, he recalled there had been frightful rumors regarding the Phantom Horseman. It was said that he had fired at several people and attempted the lives of others. Stites, the shoemaker, had returned home late one night, with his face scratched and his clothes badly torn. In response to his gentle partner's inquiries, he stated that he had been chased, for several hours, across fields and ditches, by the Phantom Horseman; that finally he stumbled, and was pounced upon before he could rise; that he fought "long and well," in proof of which, he displayed his scratches and torn clothes.

True, Stites's breath savored rather strongly of whisky, and he had some difficulty in keeping a strictly mathematical position; but then, he had just taken a swallow after the battle, to revive his exhausted energies, and he staggered somewhat as he hadn't quite succeeded in reviving them as yet.

This account, which, like all others, found believers, we say, came to Josiah Crane's mind, and filled him with the direst apprehension. He even went so far as to blame Edith Vreeland for being so attractive as to cause him to disobey his father's commands, and run this risk of losing his life. He pronounced himself a fool for having come such a way, and then resolved that he would come the very first occasion again, and bring his gun loaded to the muzzle; and then, woe to the man who attempted to cross or walk in his path. He would shoot him at first sight, without stopping to ask questions.

By this time, Crane was close to the gorge, where the Phantom Horseman most frequently made his appearance, and somehow or other he felt that the crisis was at hand. It was not likely that the being would continue his walk through the woods into the open country, nor was it likely that he would pass beyond the gorge, his favorite haunt.

Josiah was becoming desperate. He saw a place where the road widened, and he resolved to pass the man, and put his horse at full gallop. Waiting until the proper moment, he reined his animal one side, and then gave him the word.

Like an arrow from the bow, the faithful brute shot forward, and was rapidly passing the stranger; when nearly abreast, he halted so suddenly that Crane was thrown forward upon the dash-board.

"Wheel! hold on!" he exclaimed, gazing frantically round, and expecting to feel the gripe of the Phantom upon his throat. But there he was, walking as complacently in the road as if there were no living being within a mile.

Crane, now fairly wild, shouted to his horse and struck him fiercely; but, instead of going forward, he backed until he was in the middle of the road, from which he could not be forced.

"Hang me, if that don't beat all!" gasped Josiah, quieting the animal as well as possible under the circumstances. "The horse seems to know him."

There was still one resource left. If he could manage to turn his horse around, he meant to hurry back with all speed to Mr. Vreeland's and remain there until morning. It was now so late, his father was so angry that it was impossible for him to become any more so.

Again checking his animal, he began backing him preparatory to turning. Now, for the first time, the stranger paused and appeared to notice the actions of Crane. The latter had turned half-way round, when, quick as lightning, he caught his horse by the rein, and, throwing him back upon his haunches, sprang into the carriage.

"This is the time you come, is it, when I allow you to go courting? I told you if you wasn't in by eleven o'clock, I'd come after you, and so I did. I was watching you, and seen you making a fool of yourself in the porch! I jist wanted to see how you'd act the first time, you swamp. You're a purty boy to mind your father, aint you? I'll shake you! Ugh! 70-00-00-00!"

CHAPTER XIII

JOSIAH CRANE received thorough punishment from his father, for his presumption in staying so late upon his first visit to Edith Vreeland.

The old gentleman and his wife, after his departure on this eventful Sunday night, had concluded to sit up and await his return. When the old clock tolled the hour of ten, Mr. Crane began to grow fidgety and impatient, and when eleven rolled round, he was in a state of exasperation.

"The disobedient scamp!" he exclaimed to his wife; "what can he be thinking about?"

"Wait a minute or too. I think I hear carriage-wheels."

The carriage-wheels came closer and closer, and then died in the distance. They clearly belonged to some one else.

"I sha'n't wait another minute!" he said, as soon as he became aware of this, rising up, clapping on his hat, and catching up the strap that he had used for years in castigating his heir. Placing this in his side pocket, he strode wrathfully in the direction of Mr. Vreeland's. The distance, as we have stated in another place, was considerable; and, as he found himself going mile after mile without meeting his son, his anger rose to the boiling point. It is doubtful whether he would have been able to keep his hands off him, had the two encountered anywhere along the road.

When Mr. Crane turned into Vreeland's lane, his fury had settled into a stern, inflexible resolve that enabled him to keep it under control.

Making his way to the house, he there gained a position from which, unobserved, he could have a view of the lovers. No pen can depict the supreme disgust with which he saw the rude, awkward actions of Josiah. Two or three times, when he saw some of his boorishness, he was about to step forward and cuff his ears in the presence of Miss Vreeland.

When he saw him rise to go, the old gentleman left. The parting interview between the lovers was so extended, that he gained a distance which prevented his son overtaking him until they were making their way through the wood.

What took place then and there has been made known.

When Edith Vreeland acquainted her brother with the particulars of that Sunday night, he quietly smiled and made no comments. She scolded him, but could extract no promise from him that he would not encourage his visits.

"What's the use?" he asked. "It can't do any good. If he won't take a hint from you, is it likely he would accept one from me?"

"But you can make him understand."

Horace laughed and shook his head, to signify it was useless to make the attempt.

That same day, Vreeland was in the village when Josiah Crane entered the store. The latter greeted him very cordially, and then called him aside.

"Has Ely said any thing about me?" he asked, with a huge grin, that plainly showed that he was sure of hearing a compliment from her.

"She remarked that you staid quite late; that's all, I believe."

"That's all you heerd, I s'pose. Yas, I staid a considerable time, for I couldn't tear myself away till poorty late. I guess I'll be round agin next Sunday night; but I hardly think I'll stay so late."

"Why not?"

"Wal, the old man objects. Confound it! I wonder whether he's forgot when he was young. But I s'pose it was so long ago that he can't remember."

"Do you really intend to ask Edith's hand?"

"Wal, yes; I've made up my mind to take her, I think, if I find she suits."

"Well, Josiah, there is but one way in which you can get her."

"What's that?"

"Before either she or any of us will consent that she shall marry you, it is necessary that you should prove yourself worthy of it."

The lover stared with expanded eyes and open mouth.

"What's that?"

"*You must capture the Phantom Horseman.*"

"WHAT?"

"We shall never allow Edith to marry a man until he proves his courage. Who knows but what there may be another invasion of the Mohawk Valley, and that it will be necessary for her to rely upon her husband for protection. If you prove your courage by the exploit that I have mentioned, then no one dare question you."

"I'll do it," replied Josiah, with a compression of his lips, and a shake of his head. "I aint afeard of nothing, and never was, and if I don't nab that critter afore I'm a week older, then you may set me down as the biggest kind of a coward. Yes, sir."

"You're a noble fellow, Josiah, and how can the people help admiring you?"

"Wal, if I do say it myself, there aint any young fellows about here that can hold his own with me. So that's what I've got to do, afore she'll take me, is it?"

"That's what you have to do."

"Wall, as I said, I'll do it. Of course I can take a little help with me."

"O certainly, there can be no possible objection to that. You will let me know when you make the attempt."

"Yes, I will."

And thereupon the two young men separated.

Young Vreeland was now in a fair way to realize the joke he had so long contemplated. He had ardently desired a collision between Crane and the Phantom, and he believed it was now about to be effected.

Acquainting one or two of his friends with what they might

expect, he went home and told his sister the same, and then patiently awaited the turn of events. She chided him for his cruelty, and sought to dissuade him, but all to no purpose.

In the mean time, Josiah Crane had gone home revolving the important matter in his mind, and seeking for some plan by which to perform the exploit that he was sure was destined to make his name the most famous in the Mohawk Valley.

Brave as he wished to make himself appear, he was not willing to encounter the dreadful being alone. The first point necessary, in his opinion, was to secure the assistance of some trustworthy friend.

This was no triding thing. Josiah was of such a conceited disposition, that he had associated comparatively little with the young men of the neighborhood, and those with whom he did mingle, were not on the best of terms with him.

A bright idea struck him. He was in want of a new pair of boots. He would go down to Jimmy Stites, and give him an order at once. This would place Stites under such obligations, that he would not hesitate to join him in the expedition.

Still another man was wanted; and, after long and patient mental debate, he decided that Mr Vreeland's negro Jim was the most suitable that could be found. He was large, ignorant, and powerful, and a slight reward would tempt him, and once under his control, he would not dare to thwart his will.

These difficult preliminaries decided, it now remained for him to accomplish his great undertaking.

First of all, having decided upon his instruments, it was now necessary to ascertain whether they would work or not. He concluded to call upon Stites first.

He found the shoemaker pegging away in his little shop, and glad, indeed, was he to receive his order for the finest and most costly pair of boots he could make.

"Now," said Josiah, "I want to get you to help me in a matter which is very important."

The shoemaker paused with upraised hammer, and looked inquiringly at him.

"What's that?"

"You must first promise me secrecy."

"From the old woman?"

"Yes; from her, from *every* one. Do you give me your promise?"

"Certainly, certainly, certainly."

"You've heard of the Phantom Horseman?"

"I should think I had. Didn't I come purty near losing my life in trying to capture him?"

"Yes! wal, I want you to help *me* take him."

Stites laid down his little broad-faced hammer, placed both hands on his knees, and then leaned forward and stared, open-mouthed, into the face of his visitor.

"What?"

"Don't get skeart. I want you just to help; you can look on, I'm to do the work myself."

Stites drew a long breath as if there were a great load upon his heart.

"Josiah, you consider me your friend, don't you?"

"Yes; I always thought so."

"Well, then, you take my advice, and let that Phantom alone. You know he has purty near killed a lot of us lately, and if he gets hold of you, there'll be no use of talking; it will be all up."

"But I don't intend he shall get hold of us."

Stites shook his head and picked up his hammer again.

"You're not so much smarter than everybody else; and if they couldn't do it, what can you do?"

"Ah! but they didn't go about it the right way. I've got a plan that can't help do the thing."

"What is it?"

"I can't tell you now, but you'll find out in good time."

Stites, instead of hitting the peg in the sole that he was mending, struck his thumb and fore finger a blow instead. He

thereupon laid aside his work entirely, and gave himself up to the matter before him.

“Will we go alone?”

“No; I propose to take two good fellows with us.”

“Oh—ah! that makes a different thing of it. You see, we can kinder protect each other.”

“That’s the idee, exactly; just what I was thinking of when I proposed it to you. Will you go?”

“Yes; when will you want me?”

“To-morrow night, at about eleven o’clock. Will you be ready?”

“Yes, sir; don’t let the old woman know any thing about it.”

“No fear of me; all you’ve got to do is to keep your own lips shut. I tell you what, Stites, if we do get the Phantom—mind I say if we do get him—I don’t know but what I shall some time order another pair of boots of you.”

The shoemaker, as in duty bound, acknowledged the great pleasure this would give him, whereupon Josiah, with another admonition of silence, took his departure.

As fortune would have it, he had not gone a hundred yards from the door, when he encountered Hans Von Waddleyauh and Jim the negro, in an ox-cart, on their way out of the village. Halting them, he offered each a trifling sum to enlist their services, and the negro grinned and said “Yes, sah!” and the Dutchman nodded his head several times and said “Yas” quite as frequently. Admonishing them, also, to keep the secret, he hurried home to complete his arrangements.

That night Von Waddleyauh revealed the whole project to Horace Vreeland.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOSIAH CRANE at length completed all his arrangements for the capture of the Phantom Horseman. When the night came round, he made an excuse to his father of urgent business in the village, and left his home rather late in the evening.

He went afoot as he did not wish to be encumbered with a horse and wagon, at a time when the greatest secrecy and care were required. As he reached the barn, he made a cautious detour that brought him behind it, and then, looking furtively around, stooped down and drew out an immense coil of rope. Throwing this over his shoulder, he kept on toward the road.

"Just to think, this is the *last time* that 'ere Phantom will have a chance to skear folks. His time is up; he's got to knock under to Mr. Josiah Crane!

"Wont there be a time to-morrow," he added, as he walked along. "I reckon somebody'll have something to feel proud about. Wont the gals look at me?

"Edith Vreeland, too! Like as not, she'll have her boss hitched up, and come right down and see me. I'll be kinder offish at first, just to make her coax me up. I'll make her believe I am going with some other one to make her jealous and tear her hair.

"And the old man, too! I rather think he'll stop jawing about being out after ten or eleven o'clock at night. When I fetch that 'ere Phantom hum, all bound and tied up, and I calculate as how he'll keep his mouth shet after this."

Josiah was drawing most rosate pictures of his future exploits and their consequence. Like all schemes upon which he entered, he could not think of such a possible thing as a failure. He was sure of success, and amused himself in pictur-

ing the sensation that would be created throughout the neighborhood when it became known that Josiah Crane had captured the Phantom Horseman.

Without pausing at the village store, he made his way to the tavern, where he found the negro and Hans Von Waddleyanb, and took a drink of brandy to keep his courage up to the sticking-point. He then went to Stites's, where he found the shoemaker in waiting for him.

"Sh! don't make any noise!" he whispered, with a warning wave of his hand.

"What's the matter?"

"The old lady is asleep in her chair, and I never like to disturb her."

All right; hurry along."

Stites whisked nimbly out of the gate, which he closed with extreme caution, casting an alarmed look toward the house; and, for fully a hundred yards, he stole along on tip-toe, continually glancing back, as if in mortal fear that his loving spouse would awake. During this time, his invariable answer to his companion, was a warning "'sh!'" and a shake of the head.

Fairly beyond ear-shot, he stopped.

"You're alone."

"My two friends are to meet me on the edge of the wood."

Not until fairly beyond the village did they converse freely. Then they became so engaged, that they failed to notice, as they passed the the old mill on the outskirts of Millville, that half a dozen persons were peering out of the windows at them; and before they had gone fifty rods, the same individuals were in the road behind them. Had they scrutinized this company, they would have seen Horace Vreeland, and no less a personage than Damon Jones, who of late had shown no little interest in the Phantom Horseman and his proceedings.

They whispered to each other and laughed, all the time keeping at a distance that afforded them a dim view of the adherents, and using care that the latter should have no suspicion that they were followed.

"Now, boys," said Josiah Crane, "remember you are serving under me. What I say, you're to *do*." If I catch any trying to sneak off, I'll shoot him!"

This was uttered in a tone intended to awe every one who heard it. Whether it did or not, is a question upon which there may well rest considerable doubt.

Finally the party started through the Haunted Wood, Crane and Stites took the lead, while Jim and Van Waddleyauh brought up the rear. The latter frequently looked behind him. Perhaps he caught a glimpse of some shadowy figures moving to and fro; if so, he did not say any thing about it.

At length the gorge was reached, and they halted to make their final arrangements. For the first time, Josiah Crane consented to announce the plan he had formed for the capture of the Phantom Horseman.

"You see that big tree up there, which stretches one of its limbs across the road? Well, I'm going to take a seat up there, and watch for *him*. When he comes along, I'm going to drop the end of this rope, which has a big noose on the end of it, catch him right round his neck, haul him off his horse, when you must rush up and hold him till I can come down and help bind him."

This sounded well, and all expressed their delight with the plan.

"You see, there's no telling where that Phantom may be," added Crane. "He may come from one way, but is just as likely to come from the tother. Therefore I want Jim to go up, while Hans will go toward the village, and there you must set and set till you see him coming, when you must give a little whistle to let me and Stites know."

"And what am I to do?" inquired the shoemaker, with considerable concern.

"You're to stay below and help me. When I throw the rope, and catch him round the chin and haul him off his horse,

you're to rush in and knock daylight out of him till I can get down. Will you do it?"

"Y-e-s."

"All is fixed, then. You must be very careful, boys, ad led Josiah, who was powerfully impressed with the fact that he was the leader of the expedition.

Crane immediately began the ascent of the tree, while the other three took the positions that had been assigned them. When these were severally reached, then came the waiting, waiting, waiting.

A half-hour passed and still no signs of the mysterious visitant. In its place, Crane was sure he heard Van Waddleyauh talking.

"Stites, I wish you'd go down and see what is the matter with that Dutchman," called out Crane from his perch. "There must be somebody there beside him."

The shoemaker did as requested, and returned with the word that Hans was talking with himself, or, as he expressed it, with the most sensible man he knew.

It was not long before the hum was heard again, and Josiah ordered Stites to change places with the Dutchman. This the shoemaker was glad to do, as he had no relish for the particular exploit that had been assigned him.

Van Waddleyauh came obediently forward. Crane concluded it was better to make things safe, by having him in the tree beside him. Accordingly, with his assistance, the ponderous Dutchman was hoisted up, and took his seat upon the limb, a few feet from the captain of the company.

This was hardly done, when a whistle from the direction of Stites announced that the critical moment was at hand. The next instant the tramp of a horse was heard, and the Phantom Horseman was seen coming with his animal on a slow walk.

Crane had his nose ready, and was only waiting for the signal to drop it. Nearer and nearer approached the dreaded being, and Josiah's heart beat fast as he reflected that he was about to perform the greatest exploit of his life.

“Hold—here he comes—now!”

At this instant, when the noose was descending directly over the head of the Phantom, Van Waddleyauh gave vent to a tremendous sneeze—the limb shook violently—Josiah Crane lost his balance, and fell sprawling directly on the horse in front of the Phantom Horseman.

The latter, with a wild shout, seized him in his arms, and started off with his animal on a full run. The horror-stricken friends gathered round, and Vreeland and his party came up at the same moment. But they could do nothing, as the mysterious being was far away, his exultant whoop ringing out clear and full on the midnight air.

The shaking of the limb was done purposely by Van Waddleyauh, and he now felt alarmed for the consequences, but Vreeland assured him that nothing serious would happen, although he was far from feeling satisfied in his own mind.

The Phantom Horseman carried Josiah Crane to the edge of the village, there stripped him of his clothes, leaving him only a single garment, and then bade him go home. The unfortunate fellow attempted to gain entrance at several places, but was driven off by dogs, and finally, in despair, was forced to make his way home, with an old garment that he pilfered from a clothes-line. Sad to say, he was identified by several in his sorry plight, and the next morning it was known throughout the entire village.

CHAPTER XV.

Thus far, the history of the Phantom Horseman has assumed more of the burlesque than of the serious. His exploits have uniformly resulted in the discomfiture and ridicule of all who sought to bring to light the mystery which enveloped him.

But this is ended, and now comes a far different train of events.

For several weeks following Josiah Crane's failure to capture the Phantom Horseman, nothing was seen or heard of it. Persons passed through the Haunted Wood at midnight, without molestation from the mysterious being, and it finally came to be believed that it had left the country altogether.

Josiah Crane became such a butt for ridicule, that for his own peace of mind he was obliged to remain almost entirely at home. He understood too well the meaning of the significant smiles, when he met those of his neighbors who were still too considerate to rally him upon his defeat.

If any difficulty threatened between him and his father, the latter found a most potent weapon in a simple reference to his reckless adventure. The son made no reply.

One Sunday evening, he ventured to ride forth in his carriage toward Mr. Vreeland's. He took a circuitous route, so as to avoid the village; but, on reaching the house, he found it locked, and all apparently absent. He had nothing to do, therefore, but to turn about and go home. Thinking it sufficiently dark to avoid recognition, he took the nearest way by going through the village. He had hardly entered it when he was identified, and the clamor that was raised was such that he was compelled to put his horse to his best speed to get beyond it.

And when he arrived home, he had the consolation of being met by his father with the announcement that if he had remained away fifteen minutes longer he would have gone after him again.

Some three months previous to Josiah's collision with the Phantom, Minto, the Seneca, had taken his departure from the Mohawk Valley, to be gone, as was supposed, upon one of his hunting excursions. He did not return until the period when a great many supposed the dreaded being had taken his final departure from the neighborhood. It was observed then that there was a singular change in the Indian's demeanor. He

was thin and emaciated, and had a wild, haggard look, and seemed from his wearied appearance to have traveled a very great distance.

Some were uncharitable enough to believe he had been on one of his "sprees," and was now suffering the penalty; but others professed to see something different as the cause of the change. It appeared as if some deep emotion had stirred his soul so strongly as almost to deprive him of reason.

He wandered around the village, listening with eager avidity to the stories about the Phantom Horseman. His interest in, and his inquiries about, this strange being were so continued that they attracted universal remark.

When he had learned all that it was possible for him to learn, he left the village, and was not noticed until the next day, when a fishing party descried him on the edge of the Haunted Wood, wandering hither and thither, as if searching for something. They attempted to watch him, but he easily eluded them and disappeared in the forest.

That same evening, Horace Vreeland was awakened from his slumber by some light thing being thrown against his window-pane. He lay and listened a moment, thinking perhaps an unseasonable hail-storm had sprung up; but he was not long in perceiving that the missiles were tossed by a human hand, and were intended to attract his notice.

Thereupon he arose and went to his window. It was quite dark, but he could perceive the dim figure of a man standing below and looking up toward him. As he observed him move his arm to hurl another tiny missile, he rattled on the pane to signify that his signal had been heard and would be attended to.

Young Vreeland was convinced, from the action of the man in thus communicating with him, that his designs were friendly, and he felt no hesitation in going below to meet him.

Still, as a proper precautionary measure, he placed his loaded pistol in his pocket, and then carefully descended the stairs. Out in the open air, he observed the figure coming before him,

and then saw with no little surprise that it was Miutu, the Seneca.

Taking the proffered hand, he said:

"You have been absent so long that I thought you had forgotten us."

"The Seneca never forgets his friends."

"But what brings you here at this time?"

The Indian, thus invited, imparted a suspicion that he held, to the young man. It may be supposed that this suspicion was of no little importance, when Vreeland sprang back with an exclamation, and almost fell to the earth, overcome with excitement.

The two retired to a point from which it was not possible to be seen by any in the house, when they sat down and talked long and earnestly.

Not until nearly morning did Miutu rise and move away, and then, when Horace Vreeland went to the room, although he lay down upon his bed, no slumber visited him. As soon as it was light, he was stirring out doors, and had his morning work completed by the time that it was his general custom to rise.

He had scarcely finished his breakfast, when he saddled his horse, and, telling his folks that he would probably be back by noon, he galloped down the lane and turned toward the village.

Horace Vreeland never drew rein until opposite the door of Dr. Stevens, the village practitioner, a physician of more than ordinary skill and intelligence. Here he sprang from his horse, and gave a loud knock at the door. Unfortunately the doctor was absent, and the family could not tell in what direction he had gone. Vreeland had, therefore, nothing to do but to enter and wait.

This he did, pacing back and forth, his impatience being so great that he could not sit down and calmly note the passage of time.

In the course of an hour, the ruddy, genial-faced Dr. Stevens

returned, and entered the room, where Vreeland was awaiting him.

"Ah! my good friend, I hope none of the family are sick," he exclaimed, hastening forward and grasping the hand of his visitor.

"No," replied Horace, mechanically returning the salutation; "I am glad to say they are all well. But I have come to see you on a most extraordinary errand—I think you will admit the most singular you have ever received since you have been in your profession."

"Ah! I don't know about that," laughed the Doctor, bustling around the room. "A physician of my length of practice is sure to meet with some curious experiences."

"None, I am sure, like this. Are we secure from being overheard?"

"Step into my private office. Some one may rush in here without giving us due warning."

Five minutes after the Doctor had locked himself and visitor within, any one outside might have heard the loud "*By George! you don't tell me? It can't be possible!*"

This we consider sufficient evidence that Dr. Stevens was considerably surprised, to say the least. They remained closeted together for almost an hour, during which the popular physician refused to see several impatient visitors, who would hardly take any denial. The constant hum of the voices of the two in such close communion showed, too, how earnest was the conference.

Finally, Dr. Stevens unlocked his door, and accompanied his friend to the gate, merely bowing to the patients in waiting as he passed out.

As Vreeland mounted his horse, he paused a moment: "Between ten and eleven o'clock to-night. Don't go out under any circumstances!"

"I will be waiting and ready for you," replies the Doctor, bowing him away, and returning to his waiting patients.

Horace Vreeland acts strangely to-day. He rides to the village store and dismounts, and walks around as if looking for

some one. He meets many of his acquaintances, in fact all he meets are his acquaintances, and he scarcely returns their salutations.

"Say, Silas!" he calls sharply, as he espies that individual crossing the street. The shoemaker turns quickly round, and awaits further words.

"I say, Jimmy; when you and Crane got into trouble with that Phantom Horseman, did you hear him *speak* any thing?"

"Yes, Crane yell'd like all creation."

"I don't mean him. I mean the Phantom itself."

"Oh—ah! I believe it did; but as I was so far off I could not hear what it said, and Josiah never took the trouble to tell me."

"You heard it speak, then?"

"Yes."

"Did you——"

Vreeland hesitates as if he doesn't wish to finish the question; and the shoemaker, whose curiosity is up, waits until he turns his head, and looks in the downcast face with his curiosity greatly increased.

"Well, Mr. Vreeland, I'm waiting."

"Did you—that is—never mind," he sullenly breaks off, and turns on his heel, leaving the shoemaker standing motionless with amazement.

Mounting his horse again, he strikes off at a rapid gallop toward home. By this time the forenoon is considerably advancing; but, seeming to reflect that he has abundance of time before him, he reins his horse down to a walk, at which gait he enters the Haunted Wood.

"Can it be possible?" he mutters to himself. "It seems to me like a dream. Yet, Dr. Stevens is skillful. Will he be at home to-night? Is Minnie the Seneca, sure? Yes, yes, but how *positively* strange!"

Now, being in the wood, he begins to look about him with considerable curiosity. Frequently, too, he checks the progress of his horse, and listens.

"I hear nothing, and yet it is time. Mintu cannot forget, as he set the time himself."

He carefully looks at both sides of the road as he advances. This prying disposition appears to intensify as he nears the gorge, which has seen so many curious scenes during the last few weeks. The season is unusually dry, and the stream that always swells through the bottom of the gorge is now shrunk to a mere thread, whose ripple is too faint to be heard.

Vreeland has paused but a few moments, when he discerns a wagon coming up the road. He starts, as if detected in the commission of some crime, and moves on again.

To his chagrin, he recognizes his own father returning from the village. He reins up and awaits his approach, looking at his watch as he does so. He seems anxious, shakes his head, and mutters :

"It's getting late ; it wont do to wait longer."

A few moments later, his father reins up and inquires which way he is going, as his horse's head is turned toward the village.

"Home !"

"Come on with me."

"I must wait here to see a friend. You drive on, and I will shortly follow."

Looking considerably bewildered, the father consents, and drives at a brisk walk homeward.

He is not yet out of sight, when a low whistle reaches the ear of Vreeland, and he replies to it. The next moment, a form appears in the wood at his side, and, turning his head, he recognizes Mintu, the Seneca.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Nobody come ?" asked the Seneca, as he awaited the approach of his friend.

"No ; there are none who see us."

"Come on."

Horace Vreeland joined the Indian, and they began their ascent of the gorge. The stream, as we have stated, was dwindled to a mere thread, and they passed upward dry-shod.

Here and there were rough abrasions of the stones, which the Iroquois stated had been made by the feet of the Phantom Horseman. The trail of the latter generally followed the center of the gorge, as if he had sought to keep in the middle of the stream. When the latter was any thing like full, it would have required the penetrating eye of a redskin to trace the trail to its source.

It should be stated, that several attempts had been made to find the mysterious being that has figured so prominently in these pages. They failed, from two causes: the inability of the pursuers to follow the trail, and their timidity in making a general search. It was too much like hunting a burglar to his haunt, with the certainty that any moment you were liable to be pierced by a shot from some unexpected quarter.

Furthermore, the hunt of the Iroquois and Vreeland, revealed the fact, that the retreat of the Phantom Horseman was much farther up the gorge than any one naturally would suppose. When they had gone a quarter of a mile, Vreeland began looking about him for signs of the specter's presence; but the Seneca continued cautiously forward, until he had gone fully four times that distance. The gorge was scarcely entered, when it took a wild character, and Vreeland could but reflect that a regiment of men could find secure concealment within this portion of the Haunted Wood. What wonder, then, that the Phantom Horseman had issued from and retired to his hiding place with perfect immunity from the simple-hearted rustics of the neighborhood?

At length they reached a place where the banks of the ravine were much lower, and where the undergrowth and shrubbery were dense and intricate. In some places it united overhead, so that they were passing through a vegetable arch, dark and cool and still.

Placing his hand to his lips to enjoin absolute silence, Muntu

now made an abrupt turn to the right, proceeding with the most extreme caution. A hundred yards in this direction, and he paused at a place where the undergrowth was matted so densely that it seemed scarcely penetrable.

At this place, the Seneca pulled aside the bushes and revealed a horse standing quietly and munching some leaves and grass placed before him. There was no need of Miutu declaring what this indicated. Vreeland knew that he belonged to the Phantom Horseman.

He was a magnificent-looking animal, straight-limbed, of a cream color, very powerful, and capable of great speed.

"He Injin horse," remarked Miutu, as they stealthily withdrew, and made their way back to the gorge. This they ascended a few rods further, when they made a turn to the left, advancing with the same care as before. At a dense portion of the wood they stopped again, and the Seneca crept forward a rod or two on his hands and knees.

He was gone but a few minutes, when he returned with the announcement:

"*He in dare!*"

"Do you wish me to go forward?"

"No; he see you. Wait till dark comes."

They had accomplished their object in coming into the wood, and they now began their retreat down the ravine. This was done with considerable haste, and, upon reaching the main road again, they exchanged a word or two and separated.

That afternoon was the longest that Horace Vreeland had ever experienced. He tried to sleep, but he was too restless and uneasy, and passed the time in wandering about and making his preparations for the events of the night.

Waiting until quite dark, he harnessed his horse to a light carriage, and, telling his parents that he probably should not return until late at night, he drove away at a moderate pace toward the village. Just outside the lane he picked up the negro Jim, who appeared to be in waiting for him.

The next halt was in the Haunted Wood, near the gorge.

Here Vreeland drove outside the road, and beneath the shelter of a large tree. In the dim light, there was scarcely any likelihood of the horse and carriage being seen; but, to guard against all disturbance, Jim was left within it, with the instruction, to inform all intermeddlers that he was waiting for his master.

As Horace once more entered the ravine, he found the Seneca in waiting, who took occasion to tell him he was a little late; but, without any unnecessary words, they started off, the Indian leading the way as before.

It required a long time to ascend the hollow to the point which they wished to reach. Vreeland carried in his hand a small lantern, but it was unlighted, as the Iroquois would not consent to its use at the present time.

Occasionally the red-skin paused and listened. He advanced as stealthily as if he had been reconnoitering a camp of his enemies. In the shade of the wood the darkness was so great that it required great care upon the part of Vreeland to avoid falling. How it was possible for Muitu to travel with such unerring certainty he could not comprehend; but he never paused from any doubt as to the course he was pursuing, or from the obstructions that would have checked his young friend almost at every step.

Finally, Muitu stopped.

"Stay—me come back!" he whispered.

No sound betrayed his departure, but Vreeland knew that he was making his way through the wood to the place where the Phantom Horseman was hid. Nor did he know aught of his return, until, at the end of ten or fifteen minutes, he suddenly saw a shadowy figure at his elbow, and heard the whispered words:

"He sleep—me wid me."

Now came the most delicate and difficult work of all.

A single misstep might catch the ear of the sleeping man, and if once placed on his guard, no power could capture him. The long life he had spent in the woods, had undoubtedly sharpened his senses to the acuteness of an Indian.

Appreciating fully the last importance of absolute quiet, Vreeland used a degree of care that made their approach very tedious. At length the Seneca took the lantern from his hands, and with some difficulty it was lit from a spark and cinder. Obscuring the light as much as possible, they then resumed their stealthy approach.

During the next half hour they moved less than a hundred feet; and great as was the anxiety of Vreeland, he began to become impatient. Not a whisper passed between the two, until the Indian paused once more. Then he uttered the simple exclamation, "'sh!" At the same moment he raised the lamp over his head, and allowed its rays full force. As he did so, Vreeland saw that they were in a sort of cave, and that directly before them, stretched upon a bed of branches and leaves, lay the Phantom Horseman, in sound slumber.

Placing the lamp upon the ground, the Seneca took the rope from the hands of Vreeland. It was already looped for the purpose for which it was designed.

The hands of the sleeping man were quietly placed together and a noose drawn around them. The ankles were served in the same manner, and still he remained unconscious. These were tightened until the man was firmly secured, and then, for the first time, Vreeland breathed freely.

The Phantom Horseman proved to be a handsome man, apparently quite young, with a fine beard, which covered the lower portion of his face, a high, white forehead, disfigured by a large, red scar, and a form of excellent symmetry.

As the two looked down in his face, both trembled with excitement. Well might they do so!

Around the cave were scattered bunches of tow, bones, and numerous objects that he had probably used in frightening the neighborhood. A large knife lay a few feet from him, but there were no fire-arms of any description visible.

"You don't propose to carry him to the carriage?" asked Vreeland.

"No—he walk—I wake him."

The sleeping figure was now shaken, and, as he opened his eyes, he stared around him with a wild, bewildered look, which plainly betokened a disordered intellect. He commenced struggling furiously, but the Seneca raised his knife in a menacing manner, and he became as quiet and docile as a child.

The thongs were removed from his legs, and he was then assisted to his feet, and, with Vreeland upon one side, and Muntu upon the other, they began retracing their steps to the ravine.

Reaching this, they made their way carefully down it, toward the road where the carriage was in waiting. This, if possible, was a more difficult matter than their approach, as it was necessary to keep their prisoner so firmly held that he could not escape, and at the same time so guide their footsteps as to prevent falling.

Several times the man halted, and seemed on the point of attempting to escape, but the Iroquois was prepared, and he did not make the effort. It was far into the night when they reached the road, and made their way to the carriage, where Jim was waiting.

"O de gracious! hab you got him?" asked the chattering negro, as they came up.

"Yes; keep quiet, Jim."

"If you please, Massa Horace, I s'pose, if it's all de same to you, you'll 'suse me now," said Jim, jumping out of the carriage as if to assist them.

"O no! we can't think of such a thing, Jim; we want you to ride on the back seat with our friend."

"What! wil de Phantom?"

"Certainly; we want you to help watch him."

"Gracious hebban! I'se ready—dat is—you'll have to 'suse me."

"Why so? What's de matter? You ant frightened, are you?"

"Gracious! no."

"Why do you refuse then?"

"Why, de fac is—*I'se sick*. I doesn't feel berry well—I've got a pain—awful one."

"Ah, Jim, you're a coward. Go home with you."

The delighted darkey skurried down the road at the top of his speed, glad indeed to increase the distance between him and the fearful being that had created such an excitement in the neighborhood.

The latter discovered such a docile disposition, that they had no difficulty in getting him into the carriage. He took his seat in the middle; the Seneca on the left, and Vreeland on the right. The latter then gathered up the reins, and started at a brisk trot toward Millville.

Never once did the captive offer to change his position. A child could not have been more tractable than was he.

The hour was so late that, as they entered the village, scarcely a person was stirring. In Dr. Stevens's office a light was seen burning, and they knew the faithful servant was in waiting.

They had scarcely checked the carriage, when the door softly opened, and he came forth,

"Have you got him?"

"Yes."

"Right here, then."

"He was assisted to the ground, the Indian drove off toward the tavern with the horse, while Dr. Stevens and Horace Vreeland entered the house with the Phantom Horseman."

CHAPTER XVII.

It is hardly within our province to state what took place in Dr. Stevens's office in the presence of himself and Horace Vreeland. Much, the Seneca, left, as his part of the work was finished.

All night long the lamp burned within the physician's office, and it was light in the east when young Vreeland came forth

His heart was light, for the doctor had whispered words of hope as he passed out.

In the afternoon of the same day, Mr. and Mrs. Kingslake and Mr. and Mrs. Vreeland called at Dr. Stevens's and spent several hours. In fact, Mrs. Kingslake staid there altogether.

This state of affairs left Horace Vreeland and his sister alone at home. The day was warm and pleasant, and toward the middle of the afternoon the two took their seats in the shade of the portico. Edith was busy at sewing, while her brother sat idly rocking in his chair.

For a time the two sat in silence, and then he spoke:

"Do you remember, Edith, that it was on just such a day as this, five years ago, that the Iroquois Indians invaded this part of the Mohawk Valley."

"It was five years ago, this month."

"Yes; what changes have occurred since then! The Revolution has ended—we are free, and there is no danger of ever again being troubled in the same manner."

"It will be a great many years before their visit to this Valley can be forgotten."

"Yes; it will live in history. Few families escaped, some did entirely. There's that Josiah Crane, who didn't have a straw of the farm injured, while we lost our barn, and others lost every thing."

"Mr. Kingslake's house was not disturbed."

"No; he was another fortunate one."

"Horace!" exclaimed the sister, in a reproving tone. "He fortunate! What greater loss could a father have? His only child stricken down almost before his eyes."

"Do you know, Edith, that I have sometimes had my doubts whether Kingslake is really dead or not."

The sister turned pale, and scarcely restrained herself from fainting.

"Why do you speak thus?" she asked, faintly.

"Edith," said Horace, facing his sister. "tell me truly, have

you not sometimes fancied that King-lake was still among the living?"

"I have; but it has only been at rare intervals, and I never forget that I had no *reason* for thinking so for a moment."

"I don't know about that. There was something in the manner of his death, or reported death, that never fully satisfied me. I had a strong suspicion that he was carried away by the Indians. You know his body was never found."

"That might be and he still be dead."

"I hardly think so, after the strict search we made."

"O, Horace! do not trifle with me. I feel sick and dizzy now at the hopes you have raised."

"Calm your agitation, and let us discuss this matter. If Edward had really been killed, we could have scarcely failed to find his body after the search we made. That was the first thing that set me to doubting."

"But that does not seem tangible enough to hang a hope upon."

"And then it struck me as so probable that he had been carried away by the Indians and kept as a prisoner. It was that which led the Seneca to make a journey among the tribes for the purpose of gaining tidings of him."

"And he returned with the word that he was certainly killed?"

"He did at first, but how easy for him to fail? How completely the Iroquois could blind the eyes even of one of their own race."

"You have always considered Muitu one of the shrewdest of his people."

"And so he is; but he is liable to be deceived as well as others, and I have no doubt he was blinded at first."

Edith looked up in the face of her brother. Something in his intonation and manner roused her suspicions.

"What do you mean, Horace?"

"Precisely what I say, *I don't believe Edward Kinglake is dead!*"

"Do you know any thing about it?"

"Well, yes; the Seneca has been absent several months on a hunt; all that time he has spent in hunting for Kingslake."

"Did he hear any thing of him?"

"He gained tidings of a man that he had strong hope might be he."

Edith was again pale and trembling. Her brother did his best to quiet her.

"Gracious! wouldn't it be extraordinary if Kingslake had really survived and had been a prisoner all this time since his capture?"

"It cannot be possible; don't speak of it," replied Edith, mournfully.

"O, my dear sister!" exclaimed Horace, springing up and clasping her in his arms. "*Edward was not killed; he is now living!*"

Edith Wreckland did not faint, for she had been expecting something like this from the manner of her brother. He held her in his arms for a few moments, and then seating her in the old arm-chair, which was placed on the porch during the pleasant weather for her father, he said:

"Now, Edith, can you sit still while I tell you a strange story?"

"Yes; I am prepared."

"It is quite long, and there is a great deal in it that will excite you."

"You cannot increase my excitement," replied Edith, tremblingly and with tears. "But go on. Good news never kills."

"In the first place, then, we will go back to the beginning—five years ago. You remember, of course, the affray we had with the Indians, and remember, also, that the last seen of Kingslake, he was running into the woods to get away from the Indians who were pursuing him. He was overtaken, badly wounded, and carried off a prisoner, in spite of Mintu's assertion to the contrary.

"Before his capture, he received a bad wound in the head, which, when it healed, left him out of his mind, otherwise, no doubt, he would have found opportunity to escape. A lunatic, you know, is always looked upon by the Indians with superstition, if not with veneration. They consider him as one connected by special ties with the Great Spirit, and he is always treated with leniency and respect.

"It thus came to pass that Kingslake took quite a fancy to his captors, and remained willingly with them. When the Seneca paid his visit to them, several years ago, he went to the very tribe that held him captive; but they so deceived him, that he returned with implicit belief in his death.

"Thus matters remained until a few months ago, when, from some cause or other, he got the idea into his head, that he had been deceived by the Mohawks, and he started for their hunting-grounds again, not even acquainting me with his intention.

"When he got there, he came upon Kingslake, and was not long in perceiving his mental condition. While he was laying his plans to secure his release, the captive fled, and there could be no trace found of him. Mintu, at first, believed that he had been concealed by the Indians, and he spent some time in search, but he soon learned his mistake, and then concluded that he had been put to death. But reflection convinced him that this was impossible, as no Iroquois would inflict injury upon a person in his helpless condition.

"Failing to accomplish any thing, he returned to this place to take counsel with me. Nearly the first thing he heard upon reaching Millville was the excitement regarding the Phantom Horseman. The description of this strange being, the date of his appearance in the neighborhood, all gave him a suspicion, that he was no other than Edward Kingslake himself.

"With the skill which belongs to his people, he took the trail at the road, and followed it up the gorge to the hiding-place of the specter, and then and there his suspicions were confirmed. The Phantom Horseman was Edward Kingslake."

"Can it be possible?"

"It is true. One of those strange freaks, which frequently take possession of crazy persons, led him to mount one of the swiftest of the Indian horses, and make his way back to this night-wood, where, in obedience to the same inexplicable whim, he has enacted the rôle of the Phantom Horseman."

"But these strange supernatural appearances?"

"Are simple expedients that a child might have adopted to deceive any one: such as carrying lighted tow about his person, suddenly coming into the road from the gorge, riding at a rapid rate through the wood, and a dozen other things that you might have done yourself."

"He seemed to be actuated by a desire to be near his native place, and to make himself a terror to the people, as he most certainly has done."

"After Mintu had discovered the identity of the Phantom Horseman, he stated to me that he observed an inflamed wound upon the corner of his forehead, and it then occurred to me that this might be the cause of his insanity. I visited Dr. Stevens, and he told me that very probably it was. He agreed that if we could bring him to his office that night, he would make an examination of the wound, and perform an operation, if there was any prospect of a favorable result."

"Last night, Mintu and myself made our way to the hiding-place of King-lake—as I may as well call him—we secured him, and last night took him to Dr. Stevens's. He made an examination of his head, and laughed. 'See, what a little knowledge will accomplish,' said he. 'The young man's insanity has been caused by one of the simplest things imaginable. When this wound on his forehead healed, a piece of bone was left pressing upon the brain, and this alone has caused these years of mental aberration. I will remove this irritating cause, and then observe the result.'

"He was completely paralyzed ten minutes in operating, when he awoke in his senses. King-lake lay a half-hour or so, in a sort of stupor, and then—would you believe it?—awoke, and asked whether the Indians had been driven off?"

“He imagined that we were engaged in repelling the attack of the Iroquois, and the whole five years that have intervened between this time and that, are blotted from his memory. He has not the slightest recollection of a single incident since he received the wound that robbed him of reason.

“It took me the better part of the night to explain matters to him, but I succeeded at last. His first inquiry was for you. Just imagine yourself as having slept five years, and you can form some idea of his feelings upon awaking to reason.

“Father and mother and his parents have been with him most of to-day, and you and I are to visit him to-night. He has been shaved, and dressed in a good suit of clothes. The rugged life he has led, has given him the most robust health, and I think he looks better to-day than he did five years ago, when he left our house for an absence so prolonged and so eventful.”

The unraveling of the mystery regarding the Phantom Horseman, was one of the events in Millville, that took its place side by side with the Indian invasion. There were seasons of merriment for years over the discomfiture of so many people at his hands. But young Kingslake was generally beloved; and at his wedding with Edith Vreeland, it seemed that the entire neighborhood were present. The negro Jim sawed away at his violin with such gusto, and threw his head back so violently, and bounced his heel so long and tremendously in his efforts to beat time, that his elbow ached, his neck was stiff, and his heel was sore for several days. Hans Von Waddleyanh attempted to pass himself off as the Phantom Footman, but rolled down cellar in the effort, and finally abandoned the idea as a failure. Josiah Crane danced several times with Mrs. Kingslake, and seemed as well pleased as if she were really his bride. And Deacon Jones, and Dr. Stevens, and scores and scores of others were there, and all went merry as quite a number of marriage bells.

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